

Empathy | 'empəTHē| Aesthetic Reflections on Margin

This exhibition seeks to examine the role of marginalization in everyday life and its influences on artistic practices. The goal is to create a framework that allows for empathetic viewing of works of art concerning experiences that may not be akin to one's own. In this way, it is hoped that visitors can become more aware of the ways in which empathy goes beyond acceptance and challenges normative assumptions about the lived experiences of others. Ten artists are featured: Victoria Dvorsky, Rihab Essayh, Veronique Sunatori, Jonah Migicovsky, Mourad Kouri, Chloe Wise, Chara Le Marquand, Alyse Tunnell, Tamara Harkness, and Sophie Watts.

Curatorial essays written by Aaliyeh Afshar, Claude Bock, Meriam Bousehla-Demers, Isabel Connolly, Leyla Goka, Katrina Jurjans, Kris Millar (VAV co-Director), Marlee Parsons (EAHR), Ruby-Chanel Simard, Emma Sise, and Hannah van der Est, with editorial contributions by Alice Ming Wai Jim.

Curatorial Text

Multiple Voices, Narratives and Subject Matters: Pushing the Boundaries of Art Making in Empathy | 'empəTHē| Aesthetic Reflections on Marginalization

[R]ace discourse produces an economy of visibility—and simultaneous invisibility—by which group members are subject to a disciplinary gaze that operates to fix their position within a given social or political landscape through techniques of exhibition (in museums, on the street, on the screen, etc.)

– Jennifer A. Gonzalez, *Subject to Display*. [1]

Art historian Jennifer A. Gonzalez's "economy of visibility" is an argument that allows for a deeper engagement with the way that major art institutions have situated specific artists to be that the core of their permanent collections and visiting exhibitions. Most significantly, Gonzalez elucidates on the effects of institutionalization on both artists accepted into this system and artists who have deliberately been cut out. It is thus important to engage with the intention behind whose works are being excluded based on the varying experiences that these artists are depicting

in their works. It is as a response to normative and unchanging attitudes around experiences of marginalization within art that the exhibition Empathy |'empəTHē| Aesthetic Reflections on Marginalization was conceived.

The exhibition creates a framework that invites viewers to challenge their preconceived notions about the role of art in society and the ways in which they influence the perception of art.[2] Arguably the use of the term “empathy” can be problematized in the context of this exhibition as manipulated into a universal experience for each viewer and contributor. However while a valid critique, it does not necessarily encompassing of the goals of this exhibition. Empathy is an emotional response has been dictated by sociocultural influences and has been activated as a concept within critical frameworks addressing specific issues or individuals. Queer theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s book, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*, goes into depth concerning the ways in which knowledge is constructed and presented influence the way that individuals affectively understand their surroundings:

[I]t seems that a lot of the real force of such discoveries has been blunted through the habitual practices of the same forms of critical theory that have given such broad currency to the formulate themselves [... but this] may have had an unintentionally stultifying side effect: they may have made it less rather than more possible to unpack the local, contingent relations between any given piece of knowledge and its narrative/epistemological entailments for the seeker, knower or teller.[3]

Empathy has been constructed and is understood in specific contexts rather than being universal and is an academic strategy used in order for those unfamiliar with specific issues to still engage with them to the best of their ability.[4] English as the language of globalization and ultimately presents a limitation between the words used to present a message versus the argument that is being presented. A critical strategy of engagement with this limitation is to incorporate multiple curators and artists whose experiences may not necessarily speak directly to each other but can be understood as an important move to ensure that there is no favoured discourse.

Multiplicity is a major theme of Empathy |'empəTHē| Aesthetic Reflections on Marginalization from the initial conceptual stages of creating this exhibition involving diverse artists and their artworks, to the co-curators whose writings discuss specific artists and their works. It not only allows for more than one prevalent narrative to dominate the discourse surrounding this exhibition but also myriad ways in which to engage with intersecting subject matters such as: sexism, racism, sociopolitical displacement, and cultural appropriation, as well as issues surrounding the marginalization of discourses on mental health and the resources available to survivors of sexual assault. Situating each artwork within their own context and within the larger exhibitionary framework has showcased these divergent narratives. Feminist scholar Caren Kaplan's discussion on situating one's identity is especially relevant to the discourses presented within Empathy |'empəTHē| Aesthetic Reflections on Marginalization because it allows for a better understanding of the multiple perspectives that this exhibition has incorporated and those brought to it by viewers of these artworks. Kaplan writes:

It can be argued that post-modern theories that link subject positions to geopolitical and metaphorical locations have emerged out of a perception that periodization and linear historical forms of explanation have been unable to account fully for the production of complex identities in an era of diaspora and displacement. Yet, any exclusive recourse to space, place or position becomes utterly abstract and universalizing without historical specificity.[5]

Each artwork exists within their own aesthetic and subjective contexts that deal with complex issues pertaining to marginalized perspectives within this current cultural moment with their specific perspectives importantly remaining intact. Ultimately, the goal of this exhibition is to present these complex narratives in ways that respect the original goals set by the artists and to integrate them in a forum where they can be engaged with in relation to other works.

By: Kris Millar, Editorial contribution by Alice Ming Wai Jim

[1] Jennifer A. Gonzalez, *Subject to Display: Reframing Race in Contemporary Installation Art* (Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2008), 6.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (London: Duke University Press, 2003), 124.

[4] Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*, 125-131.

[5] Caren Kaplan, "The Politics of Location as Transnational Feminist Practice," *Scattered Hegemonies: Postmodernity and Transnational Feminist Practices*, eds. Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 138.

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Massacre and Memory in Victoria Dvorsky's No Comforts Known-

Text by- Aaliyeh Afshar

The artistic image serves as an essential method through which critical issues of identity can be approached. When an artwork addresses the impact of history of the formation of nation and culture, it provides an alternative mode of analysis to traditional historiography. Through visual modes of communication, powerful conflicts can be explored and addressed outside history's propensity to convey a singular perspective.

Victoria Dvorsky's *No Comforts Unknown* (2013) addresses the Armenian Genocide (1915-1923) in Turkey, one of the most brutal instances of systematic mass murder in modern history. The image depicts a bed on top of which are two pillows, white sheets and a comforter. However, a large red spatter, resembling blood, fills the centre of the bed sheet, surrounded by a few smaller drops leading to the two pillowcases. Repeated on both the pillowcases and the comforter is a distinct pattern rendered in red and grey that is actually a series of image transfers of photographs in the collection of the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute Archive. The pattern features in the forefront an emaciated child surrounded by skulls and corpses. To his left are two women leaning over a dead body. To the right, a small figure crouches with his face to the ground. In the background, a woman is seen carrying a child while three birds fly over in the distance.

Dvorsky's work re-represents photographs of the Armenian genocide in years that overlapped World War II. The systematic massacre of Armenian people was organized by the Young Turks nationalist movement (1908-1918) to strengthen and "Turkify" the population in Turkey.[1] On April 24, 1915, several hundreds of Armenian intellectuals were publicly executed. The remaining women, children and elders were deported under the guise of relocation but actually many were executed and their bodies dumped into mass graves or sent on marches across the Syrian Desert and perishing from starvation and exhaustion.[2]

Although the oppression and murder of Armenian people under the Young Turk regime could be understood as collateral damage from World World II, in 1997, a conference held in Montreal by

the International Association of Genocide Scholars passed a resolution recognizing the violence inflicted upon the Armenian population as genocide conforming to the 1948 Article of the United Nations on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide.[3] According to Professor of Genocide Studies and Prevention, Gregory Stanton, there are eight stages through which genocide develops.[4] The final stage of genocide, according to Stanton's system, is denial. The dismissal of crimes by perpetrators is thus an indicator of genocide. In the case of the Armenian Genocide, laws such as Article 305 passed in 2004 by the Turkish government which makes any mention of the genocide a criminal offence, compounds this denial.[5]

The denial of the Armenian Genocide is a key theme in Dvorsky's piece. The use of blood-red pigment alongside imagery of Armenian suffrage is the most distinct and visceral element of the work. The Turkish government's attempt to eliminate all discussion of the genocide is part of a racist and institutional pattern of exclusion.[6] The erasure of the genocide causes a trans-generational effect on the collective memory of the Armenian population, particularly in diasporic communities. Dvorsky's use of the bed as canvas imbues the piece with a particular intimacy. By directing the discussions of genocide toward the safety and the privacy of the bed, the subject becomes personal. Created almost one hundred years after the violence began, the work functions as both remembrance and analysis. The notion of memory passed between the survivor of genocide and the generations that follow becomes a central focal point.

Memory provides the individual with what postcolonial theorist Edward Said defines as "a coherence identity, a national narrative [and] a place in the world." [7] Therefore when a culture's most dominant collective memory is that of systematic mass murder, the events play a fundamental part in the actualization of identity. The receiving and transferring of historical knowledge informs the notion of postmemory developed by professor Marianne Hirsch which she defines as "a structure of inter- and trans-generational transmission of traumatic knowledge and experience. It is a consequence of traumatic recall but... at a generational remove." [8] Hirsch further uses postmemory to define the generational relationship that exists between those who witness trauma and those who experience the memory of traumatic events through stories, images, and behaviours. The suffering is felt so acutely through the conveyance of these stories that subsequent generations continue to shape their own identity through these past events. [9]

In the case of the Armenian Genocide, postmemory plays a crucial role in the construction of identity. According to Hirsch, one of the ways in which traumatic events are experienced is through photography.[10] The use of the image, specifically the photograph, as a vessel for memory is a critical part of Dvorsky's *No Comforts Unknown*. The most prominent figures featured in the repeated pattern on the bed linen, are the starving child and deportees with children walking barefoot. The latter was taken by Second Lieutenant in the German armed forces, Armin T. Wegner, who documented the Armenian deportation camps despite orders to repress the circulation of genocide-related materials. [11] Both images, taken from photographs in the Armenian Genocide Museum- Institute collection, convey struggle and suffering as well as serve as corroboration for the crimes committed.

The use of photography remediated through print is a fundamental part of Dvorsky's work given how the photographic medium is particularly entrenched in notions of history and memory. In her book, *On Photography*, Susan Sontag outlines a photograph's ability to function as a method of incrimination in this way: "A photograph passes for incontrovertible proof that a given thing happened. The picture may distort; but there is always a presumption that something exists, or did exist, which is like what's in the picture." [12] Dvorsky's use of photographs can be seen to act as a method of confirming that these violent events occurred. The photographs act against Turkey's denial by trying to do what Hirsch describes as "reanimate by undoing the finality of the photographic 'take'." [13] Photographic images provide information and confirmation as well as an emotional connection for the viewer.

By merging various photographs of the genocides into one concrete landscape, Dvorsky constructs a singular image of the image of the events. The photographs function as a channel through which postmemory can be transmitted. As the image repeats itself across the comforter and pillows, the viewer is confronted with the conflict over and over. The repetition of the image depicts the diaspora of Armenian population worldwide as the memory is carried through generations and across borders.

Dvorsky's *No Comforts Unknown* addresses notions of identity and memory associated with the events of the Armenian Genocide and serves as a contemporary artifact for postmemory. The artist's use of photographic imagery as visual vessel for memory positions here artwork as a response to the systematic oppression precipitated by the genocide. The work thus offers a re-presentation of memories that have been frequently marginalized from the greater historical narrative and functions as a provocation for discussion on issues of racism and denial.

[1] Roger W. Smith, Erick Markusen, and Robert Jay Lifton, "Professional Ethics and Denial of the Armenian Genocide," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 9:1 (Spring 1991) 1.

[2] John Kifner, "Armenian Genocide of 1915: An Overview," *The New York Times*, accessed October 28, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/ref/timestopics/topics_armeniangenocide.html.

[3] U.N. General Assembly, "Article 2," *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide*, December 9, 1948, <http://www.hrweb.org/legal/genocide.html>.

[4] Gregory H. Stanton, "The 8 Stages of Genocide," *Genocide Watch* (1998), accessed October 28, 2013, <http://www.genocidewatch.org/genocide/8stagesofgenocide.html>. The Eight Stages of Genocide are predictable but no implacable. The process is not necessarily linear, as many early stages are continually practiced.

[5] Article 305 is a portion of the Penal Code that was amended in 2005. The article stated mentioning the Armenian Genocide or criticism of Turkey's military occupation of North Cyprus prescribed punishment and legal persecution. *History News Network*, "Armenian Genocide News Highlights," *History News Network*, accessed October 28, 2013, <http://hnn.us/article/43655>.

[6] Systematic racism exists through institutions that use policy and procedures to exclude or exterminate a race.

[7] Edward W. Said, "Invention, Memory, and Place," *Critical Inquiry* 26:2 (Summer 2000) 179.

[8] Marianne Hirsch, "The Generation of Postmemory," *Poetics Today* 29:1 (Spring 2008) 106.

[9] *Ibid.*, 107.

[10] *Ibid.*, 108.

[11] Armenian National Institute, "Armenian Deportees: 1915-1916," Armenian National Institute website, accessed October 28, 2013, http://www.armenian-genocide.org/photo_wegner.html. The image of the child is believed to have been taken in 1915 from the Armenian city of Kharberd. The photographer of the image is unknown. The Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute, "Photos of Armenian Genocide," The Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute website, accessed October 28, 2013, http://www.genocide-museum.am/eng/arm_archive.php.

[12] Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Picador, 1977) 177.

[13] Hirsch, 115.

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Identity, Culture and Permeability: Examining the Work of Mourad Kouri's *On the Edge*

Text by: Katrina Jurjans

“A nation is actually nothing; countries don't exist. When astronauts went into space they did not see a line between France and Spain; France is not painted pink and Spain blue. They are political constructions, and what's inside a construction? Whatever you want to put there.”

- Santiago Sierra. 1

Traversing the boundaries of distinct religions, philosophies and cultures, one question has arguably come to shape the fundamental inquiry of humankind; who am I? For photographer Mourad Kouri this question remains perplexingly elusive. Perhaps it is easier to start with who Kouri is not; he is not Canadian (although he was born here), not Swedish (despite growing up in Sweden) and not Syrian (even though both his parents are). Unlike most people, Kouri doesn't bind identity to nationality, as his personal sense of 'belonging' has been muddied by cultural displacement. Instead he exists somewhere in the middle of these socio-political constructs, finding neither home nor solace within their fixed confines. It is within this in-between state that his photographs have begun to develop, and as the artist admits, it was not until recently that their meaning breached the context of identity.

Photographed over different time periods, Kouri's photographs of Sweden and Syria were originally part of distinct bodies of work; *On the Edge*, marks the first time they are being shown as a collective whole. This artistic decision ignites a triangular dialogue between the presumably distinct worlds of 'egalitarian' Sweden and 'war-torn' Syria as posited by Western media, and the viewers' preconceived ideas of both. As each dialogue is molded through the viewers' subjectivity, the illusion of a 'universal understanding' is dismantled. This dismantling brings to mind post-structuralist theories of deconstruction, in which a fixed and stable identity is rendered impossible. 2 As theorist Ihab Hassan states, “The more interactive the globe, the more populations move, jostle and grapple – this is the age of diasporas – the more questions of cultural, religious and personal identity become acute – and sometimes specious.” 3 Thus, congruent to an increase in cultural displacement and globalization comes a constant exploration of self-definition. As borders of nationality begin to overlap into one another the process of

identification becomes increasingly deceptive; something that slips through the fingers and lurks in the shadows of transition. As the 'self' attempts to define itself in relation to the constantly changing 'other,' it too becomes a constantly changing 'self.'

Having grown up in Norsborg, Sweden, a suburb of Stockholm constructed by an 'as many people for as cheap as possible' mentality, Mourad's upbringing became intrinsically attached to questions of self-identity. 4 Considered the 'housing project of Sweden' in the 1970s, Norsborg solidified the notion of marginalization both physically and mentally with its concrete, box-like architecture becoming a symbol of segregation for those that couldn't afford to live in Stockholm's center. More often than not, those pushed to the peripheries were recent immigrants whose already volatile positions became further destabilized within this alienation. 5 As feminist theorist Lynda Nead states, "margins are primary as the site for the subject's struggle for attainment of identity." 6 Thus, as Mourad attempted to balance upon the precarious borderlines of neither 'here' nor 'there,' his identity began to dissolve into questions that challenged the relationship between nationality and belonging. However, as Mourad's identity began detaching itself from concrete categorization, Norsborg's identity became unflinchingly attached to corruption and impoverishment, as drug consumption, crime rates and suicides escalated. 7 Thus, affected by his immediate surroundings, Mourad began to photograph the Sweden of economic disparities and concrete segregation: the enervated underbelly of societal injustice.

In a process mimicking dark room exposure, photographs Norsborg I, Norsborg II and Bodies of Modernity became physical manifestations of existential crises that developed under the light of Norsborg's socio-cultural instability. Both Norsborg I and Norsborg II reveal a bridge situated in the outskirts of Norsborg, whose shallow waters painfully receive those that have taken their own lives. Photographed in sharp black and white contrast, the photographs become declarations of both individual turmoil and collective suffering. As one's surroundings become internalized they simultaneously become externally projected, highlighting the permeability of internal and external boundaries. 8 Thus, in Norsborg I and Norsborg II, the bridge symbolizes when physical marginalization percolates body boundaries becoming psychologically internalized and subsequently conveyed through physical acts of desperation, such as suicide. Bodies of Modernity communicates a similar message, as a faceless man becomes a symbol of convoluted

identity and distressing displacement. So where are the green pastures, rolling hills and lush forest we are so used to seeing? Mourad insists they do exist, but clearly states, “for me, this is Sweden.” 9

This simple statement speaks volumes with regards to both the vast concept of national identification and the medium of photography in that both institute rigid parameters of inclusion/exclusion. Just as a nation is a political construction that establishes who can, and more importantly, who cannot, permeate its border, the camera apparatus initiates a framing device that engenders the same exclusive parameters. Continuing with this concept, Mourad’s photographs of Syria; *Daughters and Border Grazing*, are deliberately framed to expose the viewer to the “human story behind conflict.” 10 Taken in the summer of 2011, at the wake of the Syrian civil war, Mourad’s artistic aim became to document human love and connection; the love between a mother and daughter, a shepherd and his sheep, as opposed to the violently explicit photographs circulating in the majority of international media. As the artist insists, his aim is not to disparage the present, and undoubtedly horrific, reality of war, but give voice to those that have been dehumanized through this reality. 11

In his essay, “Play Me the ‘Other,’” author Olu Oguibe addresses the dilemma of culturally specific work; the presumptuous gaze of predetermined origin. 12 So here, once again, we are faced with a question of borders. Just as national borders are political constructions of control, the camera apparatus a rigid rectangle of exclusion, the viewer too wears limiting blinders of preconception. In this way, viewers’ are automatically inclined to view Mourad’s photographs in relation to their predetermined notions of both countries. But, just as they begin searching through their repertoire of acquired cultural images, their preconceptions are shattered. The rolling green hills of Sweden become a landscape of cultural crisis; the war-torn streets of Syria a declaration of love and warmth. Although this reversion reiterates the impossibility of a fixed and stable identity, it also reiterates the hierarchical binaries that make such a reversion possible. That is to say, Sweden and Syria can only be reconsidered in their ‘new context’ in opposition to previously ingrained determinations.

So how do we, as both artwork viewers and artists, step from underneath the cloud of preconception, off the podium of cultural hierarchy, and away from dangerously limiting boundaries? There is no easy answer or quick remedy, but in order to answer the age-old question, who am I? We must also ask, who are we, and what is the meaning of our contemporaneity? We are on this earth together for as long as the quick snap of the camera shutter, and in this short time we must “discover modes of self-transcendence that avoid blind identification,” and use art as a tool of communication to cross the boundaries of ‘subject’ and object,’ of ‘self’ and ‘other.’ 13

1 Margolles, Santiago Sierra quoted in “Santiago Sierra,” 3.

2 Baudrillard, “The Precession of Simulacra” 256.

3 Hassan, “From Postmodernism to Postmodernity: The Local/Global Context” 119.

4 Interview with Mourad Kouri, October 22nd, 2013.

5 Interview with Mourad Kouri, October 22nd, 2013.

6 Lynda Nead, “Theorizing the Female Nude” 32.

7 Interview with Mourad Kouri, October 22nd, 2013.

8 Lynda Nead, “Theorizing the Female Nude” 32.

9 Interview with Mourad Kouri, October 22nd, 2013.

10 Interview with Mourad Kouri, October 22nd, 2013.

11 Interview with Mourad Kouri, October 22nd, 2013.

12 Oguibe, “Play Me the Other: Colonialist Determination and the Postcolonial Predicament” 20.

13 Hassan, “From Postmodernism to Postmodernity: The Local/Global Context” 123.

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Chloe Wise

Text by: Ruby-Chanel Simard

The Canadian nation prides itself greatly on the notion of multiculturalism and its open reception to foreigners from various countries that come take residence in Canadian society. Canadians after all are commonly known as being extremely harmonious and welcoming, though, unfortunately due to these built in stereotypes, many are unaware of the realities of many of its inhabitants. These stereotypes, no matter how positive they are, are quite false. Despite our nation's great effort to push for multiculturalism, many immigrants that reside in Canada never the less feel as if they are outsiders in Canadian society. Many are discriminated against, excluded and marginalized because of their identity as 'other,' which is anything that is ultimately not the norm. This discrimination does not pertain simply to race, but to religion and gender, and is a growing issue in Canada, and especially recently in Quebec with the proposed Charter of Quebec Values by the Parti Quebecois government which hopes to create a secular state.

For this exhibition, Chloe Wise brings forth issues reflecting on her background and ways in which she as an artist deals with marginalization in her life and through her work. Growing up in Westmount, a beautiful and prosperous suburb on the island of Montreal, Wise never felt marginalized or oppressed as a non-religious, yet tradition-practicing Jewess. Many people surrounding Wise also had quite similar upbringings of not experiencing anti-Semitism or oppression because of their Jewish background. Historically, the prejudice and discrimination against Jews has been going on for centuries, most notably with the holocaust which was the mass genocide of approximately six million Jews during World War 2 headed by German dictator Adolf Hitler and the Nazi party.[1] Current day Anti-Semitism is still operating in Canada from graffiti signs and slogans which highlight anti-Jewish messages and individual threats and insults. [2] Inherently, Canada is still racist and people are marginalized everyday. However according to the artist, she never felt discriminated against because of her Jewish heritage; on the contrary, Wise feels that Jewishness inherently marginalized other groups. This work is self reflective of the religion and of her upbringing and she is quite critical of her own background as a method of bringing these issues to the forefront. She rejects many of the rules

and regulations of Judaism which is quite visible in her artistic production. Many of her works surround ideas of Jewish traditions, such as the Bar Mitzvah and the commodities that often correlate with it.[3] This rite of passage is often connected with extravagant gifts that are quite prevalent in our consumer culture such as Louis Vuitton bags and Ugg boots, which questions ideas of acceptance, popularity, tradition and consumer culture. Her works somewhat disfavours her traditions, yet she brings forth awareness and humour in order to question notions of arbitrary rules set forth by religion and tradition. Similarly, Jewish-Latina artist Maya Escobar deals with issues of roles and regulations in the Jewish community as well. In her work “Shomer Negiah Panties” she questions rules and regulations surrounding menstruation periods. Shomer Negiah refers to the law that limits sexual relations, and is said that this strong followers of this tradition will be more connected body and soul. She displays this work as womens underwear which pushes the traditional boundaries of exposing women’s undergarments, something that is highly frowned up. By exposing these she challenges the age old traditions, displaying similar ideas that Wise does in her work. [4][5]

Her hyper realistic oil painting structure that is presented is titled “Star of Larry David,” making reference to Jewish-American television producer, head writer and co-creator of the television series Seinfeld.[6] David’s portrayal of himself (as George Costanza) is often quite self deprecating making many references to Jewish traditions and stereotypes, it can be seen as a type of ethnic humour. Wise describes many of her works as self deprecating and humorous, using irony and puns to relay her message and allows viewers to read between the lines.

Wise’s recontextualization of the ‘Star of David’ as a star made of bacon pokes fun at the rules and regulations that make up a religion, especially the idea of ‘kosherness’. By following these rules and regulations in the religious realm, it signifies that one is good and genuine. According to the Jewish dietary laws, practicing Jewish people are forbidden to consume unclean foods such as pork. Only certain meats are permissible, animals that ruminates and have cloven hooves are the only animals that are considered clean and fit for consumption.[7] If one does consume such tainted and unclean foods, your soul and body become disconnected because eating kosher is not meant to be healthy for the body but rather for the soul. According to the Torah, the five books that teaches the rules and regulations of Judaism, if one doesn’t follow the Jewish dietary

laws, your spirit will be tainted and you will create barriers between you and god. [8] The artist is interested in looking at the 'forbidden' and how sometimes the forbidden is what you ultimately want to revel in and to expose, such as the forbidden unclean meat she displays.

Through her work, Wise wants to re-educate people that are Jewish, or that practice any religious that denotes a set of capricious rules. These rules in a sense control and create boundaries that one must not rupture, and upon this breach you are punished or expelled. Wise questions the notion of the 'forbidden and the stigmatization that religious followers enforce onto people that disobey the religious 'law's.' The slight separation of good and bad based on age old traditions demonstrates the marginalization that occurs on certain religious degrees. This marginalization is what Wise wants to bring to the forefront and the marginalization that occurs when people do not share similar beliefs, and how they are being excluded and oppressed for thinking differently. Through this artwork, she hopes to educate visitors in becoming more aware of terms such as 'good' and 'bad' which have inflexible definitions and how we must re-evaluate language and broaden terms especially when regarding personal beliefs. We must also look at this work and understand how important food and beverages are as important religious and social markers in our everyday life. By challenging these food traditions within a culture, they become taboo once again breaking these regulations and exposing it bare.

[1] 'Report on Global Anti-Semitism' Last Modified January 2005, <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/40258.htm>.

[2] Nicolas Keung, 'Anti-Semitism Incidents Jump 5 Fold in Canada,' The Star, Last Updated April 2010, http://www.thestar.com/news/investigations/2010/04/11/antisemitism_incidents_jump_fivefold_in_canada.html

[3] Ex. Thanks Daddy! (2013) & Exotic Yet Local (2013)

[4] Maya Escobar, 'Shomer Neriah Panties,' Maya Escobar, Last Accessed November 9th 2013, <http://shomernegiahpanties.com/>.

[5] Ben Schacter, 'Blurring Boundaries Between Jewish Denominations,' Maya Talk, Last Updated July 2010, <http://blog.mayaescobar.com/2010/07/25/blurring-boundaries-between-jewish-denominations/>

[6] An American television sitcom that aired on NBC from July 5th 1989 to May 14th 1998 in which the cast is predominantly Jewish. The television show is often said to be highly influenced by the cultural uneasiness that was brought on by the Jewish Enlightenment, where the more Eurocentric Jews make fun of

the more seriously religious and traditional Jews such as the Chassidic rabbis. The style of humour derived from the tension between the Jewish comedy and American culture of the 20th century.

Rebecca Segall and Peter Ephross, 'Critics Call Show 'Self-Hating': Was Seinfeld Good for Jews?' Jewish Telegraphic Agency, Last Updated May 8th 1998 , <http://www.jweekly.com/article/full/8208/critics-call-show-self-hating-was-seinfeld-good-for-jews/>

[7] 'Kashrut: Jewish Dietary Laws' Last Modified 2011, <http://www.jewfaq.org/kashrut.htm>.

[8] Ibid.

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It's just fabric?: Addressing Post-raciality and the Threat of the "Other" to Québécois Identity

- Text by: Claude W. Bock

On September 10, 2013, the Government of Quebec led by the separatist Parti Québécois introduced the Charter of Quebec Values, formally tabled as a bill on November 7 and retitled the Charter Affirming The Values Of Secularism And The Religious Neutrality Of The State, As Well As The Equality Of Men And Women, And The Framing Of Accommodation Requests. As details of the Charter have been released it has become clear that there is no interest in true secularism, rather, it is an attempt by the government to impose its cultural hegemony and post-racial prejudices on the public in order to create state-sanctioned discrimination of those who are not "pure laine"[1] Québécois. In response to the effects of this divisive piece of proposed legislation, artist Rihab Essayh interviewed 25 Muslim and non-Muslim women and transposed the results of the interviews to create *It's just fabric?* The depiction of Muslim headdress slowly enveloping invisible faces addresses the marginalisation of Muslim women and is concurrent with increasing Islamophobia as well racialization through religious difference by the government of Quebec.

It's just fabric? consists of large graphite drawings in which a faceless head is being progressively wrapped in fabric, in five stages over two drawings, until it is completely covered. The anonymity of the person whose head is being enveloped by the fabric is a deliberate choice of the artist. By leaving the identity of the person blank, the artist wishes the viewer to place themselves in the position of that person. To feel the increasing marginalisation and exclusion as the head is slowly wrapped, inhibiting the person's ability to see and hear. It effectively cuts off the person from contact and interaction with the public. Eventually the head is completely wrapped, the fabric transforms into a trash bag reflecting the government's treatment of the "Other" in Quebec society. The "Other" is reduced to detritus, unwanted and placed outside of the dominant Québécois culture for being different and therefore threatening to the status quo.

Through her interviews for *It's just fabric?* the artist discovered that since the introduction of the proposed Charter, Muslim women have increasingly become targets of racist

slurs and insults, thus reinforcing their status as “Other” within Quebec society. These reports have been most recently substantiated by a study from The Quebec Collective Against Islamophobia that indicates there has been a 300 percent increase in anti-Muslim violence since the release of the proposed Charter.[2] A recent article in the Montreal Gazette points out that prior to the proposed Charter, Muslim women encountered almost no discrimination but since then Muslim women have increasingly been subjected to discrimination, threats and insults.[3] The Government of Quebec is directly responsible for the intolerance and xenophobia which has made Muslim women a target of discrimination by people who have been emboldened to act by the proposed Charter. The government in its rather disingenuous desire to promote secularism is fanning the flames of intolerance and xenophobia. To get to the root of the government’s motivations, it is important to consider the proposed Charter through a post-racial discourse as well as Québécois identity within the context of a populist ethno-national movement.

Post-raciality is the belief that a people of a society have moved beyond race, that race no longer matters and encompasses terms such as colour-blindness and colour-neutrality.[4] “These discourses of denial sustain the racial status quo and the authority and supremacy of whiteness, by stripping race of any explicative power to make sense of current social inequalities.”[5] Key to this statement is that racism and its subsequent reduction is based on biological factors, such as skin colour, to the exclusion of anything else. Thus by being post-racial, the society believes it has reduced or eliminated racism. But as sociologist Sirma Bilge notes

Once racism is ruled out, since what matters is not skin colour but ‘similarities in worldview, racialized others can be legitimately excluded from the national space through compatibility rhetorics focusing on core values, wherein racial tropes abound, masquerading as cultural, linguistic, religious, geographic or temporal attributes.[6]

In this one can pinpoint the hidden racism of the proposed Charter. Through the desire for a secular state the Quebec government reinforces racism based on what makes people different. The wearing of a hijab, turban or yarmulke makes a person different and automatically placed outside accepted Quebec norms and traditional concepts of Quebec national identity.

In Quebec the dominant culture is the French speaking, Christian (predominantly Catholic), Caucasian man and woman, this is to say Québécois, this is one of the key aspects of Quebec national identity. Guy Bédard, in attempting to define Québécois identity, points out that "...this slogan of Québec aux Québécois is [...] an ethnic definition of Québécois based on race, culture, and language: social markers for exclusion.”[7] Québec aux Québécois is an important part of the Québécois identity, the belief in the ability of French-Canadian Québécois to govern themselves and others. Yet, this reinforces the White dominant power structure and White entitlement that is Québécois. It is an entitlement that was sanctioned in the debate about reasonable accommodation which “confirmed the status of French-Canadian Québécois as the sovereign subjects entitled to govern others, who were turned into objects, targets of governmentality.”[8] Targets are exactly what those who are not considered true Québécois have become.

Finally, now that the Québécois can govern themselves and others it is critical for them to protect their culture and common values, in other words a policy of ethno-nationalism. Of course, there is a racial connotation here; their culture and values need protecting from the “Other.” The “Other” are those who are different from the White establishment Québécois. They have different beliefs, traditions and different perceived values that threaten the Québécois status quo.[9] Ethno-nationalist ideology is both populist and neoconservative. It is a major platform of the Parti Québécois and is “now a dominant ideology of the new Québec government.”[10]

Now the pieces can be put together. The Parti Québécois government working under the guise of secularism and post-raciality is advancing their ethno-nationalist ideology through the Charter of Quebec Values. As has been illustrated this has had a negative impact on those who are perceived or relegated in the position of the “Other.” There has been an increased marginalisation of the “Other.” Focusing on the lives of Muslim women, Rihab Essayh’s drawing *It’s just fabric?* challenges viewers to assume the role of a marginalised person in hopes that they may gain some insight into the lives and empathy for those who are marginalised because of the government’s policies.

[1] Pure laine refers to the Francophone natives of Quebec who are descendants of the settlers of New France. Another term used interchangeably is Québécois de souche or old stock Québécois. Both terms

are used to differentiate between true or real Québécois and les autres, the “Others,” a term which includes immigrants, visible minorities and Anglophones.

[2] “Quebec Muslim Women ‘Scared to Walk Alone’,” CBC News/Montreal, November 06, 2013, accessed November 06, 2013, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/quebec-muslim-women-scared-to-walk-alone-1.2416443>.

[3] Sheila McLeod Arnopoulos, “Nasty Remarks and Dirty Looks,” Montreal Gazette, November 08, 2013, accessed November 08, 2013, <http://www.montrealgazette.com/opinion/Opinion+Nasty+remarks+dirty+looks/9138863/story.html>.

[4] Sirma Bilge, “Reading the Racial Subtext of the Québécois Accommodation Controversy: An Analytics of Racialized Governmentality,” *Politikon: South African Journal of Political Studies*, 40, no. 1 (2013): 160.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Guy Bédard, “Québécois : An Ambiguous Identity,” *Talking about difference. Encounters in Culture,*

Language and Identity, Ed. Carl E. James and Adrienne Shadd (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2001) 30.

[8] Bilge, 166.

[9] Ibid., 173.

[10] Ibid.

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Come Clean: Clearing Up One's Perception

- Text by: Meriam Bousehla-Demers

The work of African Canadian artist of Tamara Harkness, *Come Clean*, deals with the issue of racial discourse present in everyday life. Her work consists of a series of four handkerchiefs each on which are cross-stitched different confessional quotes from discussions with friends about behavior that is not always perceived as racist or discriminatory in society but in fact are. The use of the handkerchiefs reflects the idea of cleaning, particularly ways in which people need to clean their minds in order to be comfortable upon the recognition of their own internal racism. The notion of comfort is also suggested by the handkerchiefs, recalling home as a place of security. The sense of home and reference to cleaning, lessen the harshness of the quotes that speak about the presence of racism. *Come Clean* is an attempt to delicately expose racial attitudes that exist within everyone, to raise awareness of the problem, and ultimately denounce society's complacency towards racism.

By focusing on everyday racism, the concept of "White privilege" is also addressed in Harkness' work. Writing in 1989, when anti-racist feminism emerged and challenged mainstream feminist theories, feminist and anti-racist activist Peggy McIntosh defined, "white privilege as an invisible package of unearned assets which I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was 'meant' to remain oblivious"[1]. In one of Harkness' handkerchiefs titled "Indian Princess," the person quoted admits her privileged position in society: "I used to dress up as an 'Indian princess' but I was a little white privileged girl." McIntosh argues that children are only taught about one side of the phenomenon of racism; for example, kids would recognize an oppressive behavior based on skin-color. Yet, racism is not only about oppression, it is also about the power of one group over another[2]. Because, "Whiteness" is not seen "as a racial identity," White people tend to absolve themselves from having a racist behavior[3]. Documenting her friends' confessions of using racial discourses, the quotes speak to how White privilege is still present, operating unconsciously in ways that continue to shape Canadian's identity.

In her essay "Canadian Anti-Racist Feminist Thought: Scratching the Surface of Racism," Women's Studies scholar Enakshi Dua argues that a culture of Whiteness is implemented even in

social institutions: “historically, the notion of who could be legally eligible for Canadian citizenship was tied to race, skin colour became a central (though not the only) marker of who could belong to the Canadian national formation.”[4] As a result, owing to the history of European colonialism the dominant image of Canadian identity has remained a “white’s man country.”[5] The possibility of a culturally-diverse, and yet unified society, remains unconceivable for some White Canadians. This is visible, according to Dua, through policies and laws implemented by the government. For example, the quote on the handkerchief titled “Metis” describes a double identity: “My best would always talk about being metis when she was drunk I found this obnoxious and boring.” On the one hand, oppression has been a constant factor in Aboriginal peoples’ relationship within Canada. On the other hand, the confession suggests disdain when one is reminded of Canada’s relation with Aboriginals.

In another example, the handkerchief entitled “Exotic Status” recalls how, according to Africana Studies scholar Sophie White, Black slaves were seen as “exotic” goods: being in possession of slaves elevated the social status of the owner [6]. For centuries, White middle-class across Europe and North America commissioned paintings that included representations of slaves to display their wealth. For example, Anthony Van Dyck’s Portrait of Elena Grimaldi, Marchesa Cattaneo (1623), the Black servants included in the painting are represented as if they were fashionable accessories. Harkness’ “Exotic Status” handkerchief in which a friend admits their belief that having intimate relations with a person of African descent would impress his or her friends, speaks to this still persisting colonial objectification and subjugation of “Others” as exotic objects and status symbols.

As a vehicle for self-reflection, Come Clean suggests the sentiment guilt on the part the four people quoted for contributing, whether consciously or unconsciously, to the perpetuation of racist attitudes and behaviours towards ethnic minorities through outright racial biases to damaging expressions of internalized racism. The fourth of the handkerchiefs titled “Made Fun of Accent” in fact points to how, as sociologist Carl E. James argues, in order to feel that they belong to a society, minorities “compromise their ethnic identity [by] denying their ethnicity or race because these characteristics identify them as ‘different’ or ‘inferior’.”[7] Thus, mocking someone’s accent because it is different from typical accent of native English-speaking

Canadians is a main way in which Canada's "ethnoracial minorities are placed outside the national project of Canada [and] excluded from the 'imagined community'." [8]

To conclude, Harkness' series *Come Clean* is an attempt to expose the workings of internal and internalized racism and racial discourses that exist in the everyday. The different components of the work come together to show that racism affects everyone, delicately bringing forward a critical lens on notions of White privilege, guilt and self-denying, and the damaging legacies of slavery and colonialism that continue to shape the ways in which questions of belonging and identity are expressed within the Canadian context.

[1] Peggy McIntosh, *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack*, edited by Scott Plous (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2003), 1.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] *Ibid.* 3.

[4] Enakshi Dua, "Canadian Anti-Racist Feminist Thought: Scratching the Surface of Racism," *Scratching the Surface: Canadian, Anti-racist, Feminist Thought*, edited by Enakshi Dua and Angela Robertson (Canadian Scholars' Press, 1999), 1.

[5] John O'Brian, "Wild Art History," *Beyond Wilderness: The Group of Seven, Canadian identity, and contemporary art* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007), 37.

[6] Sophie White, "Geographies of Slave Consumption," *Winterthur Portfolio* 45, No. 2/3 (2011): 236, accessed October 25, 2013, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/661557>.

[7] Carl E. James, "Race, Ethnicity, and Cultural Identity," *Identity and Belonging*, edited by Sean P. Hier and B. Singh Bolaria (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 2006), 51.

[8] Frances Henry and Carol Tator, "The Theory and Practice of Democratic Racism in Canada," *Perspective on Ethnicity in Canada: A Reader*, edited by Madeline A. Kalbach & Kalbach (Toronto, Montreal: Harcourt Canada, 2000), 297.

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Challenging the Idealized Form: Appropriating Visual Culture to Confront the “Status Quo”

- Text by: Kris Millar

Sophie Watts' prints *Am I A Star Yet?* (2010) and *Held Back* (2010) recontextualizes imagery of women sourced from popular billboard advertisements displayed on Sainte-Catherine West, one of the main streets within Montréal's downtown core. These billboard advertisements are highly visible, regularly seen by a large and encompassing demographic of individuals and speak to the increasingly sexualized imagery that have become common and frequently used by corporations selling products that vary from clothing to food products to cultural events in the city. Watts references these invasive images to produce works that challenge the perceived notions surrounding normative bodies and the codification associated to a specific aesthetic that marginalizes anyone who fits outside of these strict parameters. The appropriation of imagery from popular culture is seen as a feminist art practice that attempts to critique the patriarchal societal structures by deconstructing the imagery that has been produced by the most privileged individuals within this system with the most to gain, most often being a monetary venture.

Motivated by a feminist perspective, Watt's prints rely on a monochromatic colour scheme, using neutral black and white, with the only colour visible within either print is a bright pink piece of paper used to print *Am I A Star Yet?* to create a stark template for these commonly-found images to be seen. As a result, one is better equipped to see how in *Held Back*, the male model aggressively handling the woman's body in order to restrain her from action is juxtaposed with the title printed on the bottom of the page as a way to anchor the viewer into the piece and the body language that is presented by these models. [1]

My use of the words “her” and “woman” instead of “model” or “subject” throughout this paper is a deliberate stylistic choice, rather to distance the viewer from the imagery presented in these works. In this way, it critically assigns agency and individuality to these women in order to better engage with the images presented. This methodological approach borrows from feminist art historical interventions on normative academic writings on typically the male artist's relationship to his usually female model to acknowledge that these power relations exist and need to be

challenged.[2] Watts' overall aesthetic borrows heavily from 1990s DIY (do it yourself) zine riot grrl culture that focuses on the deconstruction of patriarchal imagery in order to empower women to critically engage with popular imagery produced and disseminated by companies and major institutions.[3] By combining a deliberate feminist aesthetic and art historical pedagogy, Watts' artworks can be inserted into a broader discussion on the codification of bodies and the way that individuals have been marginalized as a result of this extreme dichotomy. The Guerrilla Girls, one of the most famous Western feminist artists groups was formed in response to the way that canonical art history favoured white, privileged male artists above all others. They have been creating poster campaigns to critique what has been happening in the art world and to challenge the status quo. As they state:

We present provocative images and statements, backed up by information, that give the audience a chance to think about an issue and come to a conclusion, hopefully on the side of feminism and social change. We believe that some discrimination is conscious and some is unconscious and that we can embarrass some of the perpetrators into changing their ways... But consider just two of our hundreds of actions: first, our billboards in Hollywood, right down the street from the Oscar ceremony, telling the sordid truth about the low, low numbers of women and people of color behind the scenes in the film industry; and second, our large-scale installation at the Venice Biennale examining discrimination at the exhibition itself.[4]

Watt's prints fit into a long tradition of feminist art historical interventions within modes of art production by engaging with current visual culture. The codification and commodification of women's bodies is a contentious issue that has stemmed from the earliest depictions seen in art and other products of visual culture.[5] What has happened through this codification is the assignment of behaviours and assumptions that are based on visual markers rather than enacted behaviours that an individual possesses. The codification of behaviours onto bodies and as markers of difference between people has resulted in the creation of a false dichotomous relationship that is entirely dependent upon positioning an individual into the "us versus them" model of engaging with societal constructs.[6] While Watts' artworks focus on the hypersexualization of women, her approach to critiquing visual culture can be applied intersectionally by looking at the privileged bodies that are captured; such as those of white,

attractive, cis-gendered women and men. Rarely are there people of colour, people with disabilities or that are trans* identified captured within visual culture and that causes a distancing between reality and these constructed images. The goal of Watts' prints is to raise awareness towards the way that individuals view their own bodies in relation to visual culture and to bring to the attention of the viewer that images are constructs. All images come from a deeply subjective place and are the result of residual cultural norms; making it more crucial than ever to deconstruct these images and to ensure that viewers are empowered with this knowledge.

[1] The assertion that these are women come from the artist, Sophie Watts own commentary on her works. I am not ascribing to a cissexist understanding of gender identity but using the framework put forth by this artist to discuss the codification of bodies and how it has resulted in aesthetics directly correlating to specific attributes and behaviours.

[2] Feminist art historians and artists have been challenging the patriarchal narrative that has dominated art historical discourses by reintegrating women artists back into the art historical narrative, by producing posters such as the Guerrilla Girls to critique institutional biases that continually negate the artistic practices of marginalized artists and to continually engage with current visual culture to produce works that problematizes the images produced. Source: Mary Flangan, Jennifer A. Gonzalez, The Guerrilla Girls, Margo Machida, Marsha Meskimmon, Martha Rosler, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, subRosa and Amelia Jones, "Feminist Activist Art, a Roundtable Forum, August 24-31, 2005," NWSA Journal 19: 1 (Spring 2007): 4-5.

[3] Mary Flangan, Jennifer A. Gonzalez, The Guerrilla Girls, Margo Machida, Marsha Meskimmon, Martha Rosler, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, subRosa and Amelia Jones, "Feminist Activist Art, a Roundtable Forum, August 24-31, 2005," 4-10.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Griselda Pollack, *Vision and Difference: Feminism, femininity and the histories of art* (London: Routledge, 1988) 10-13.

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Migration Between Dominance and Other: Candid Photography as a Proof of Hybrid Conditioning

- Text by: Leyla Goka

Intention is crucial to the photographic practice. To witness life through organic sentiment, the existence of a candid photograph's subject must be captured openly in order for it to reach an aesthetic interest level as such. To say interpretation on behalf of the viewer is uncontrollable is also to insist that the question of intention as the unwavering bottom line of a work is actually open to clarification, but in terms of candid photographs based within urbanity such as Jonah Migicovsky's *Hochelaga* (2013) and *Blue Bandana* (2013), that clarity will never reach pertinence. The agency that performs the works' effect requires elucidation.[1] The cultural representations that these two photographs offer as consequences of individual performance offer casual yet striking proof of different marginalized signifiers unreservedly interacting with conditioned dominance.

Migicovsky has captured an irreproachability that utilizes cultural binaries to affirm the viewer's preconceived notions of where these signifiers lie. Simultaneously, they convey confidently that these are intrinsic parts of the entities themselves and their surroundings. In *Hochelaga*, which was shot in Hochelaga-Maisonneuve, an eastern borough in the island of Montreal, the draping of poorly finished multicoloured braids over an idealized image of a hair model for *Motions*, a product line for women of colour founded in 1993,[2] serves as an aesthetic representation of marginalized defiance. The decision to subliminally don a bandana under a matching cap and ride a city bus is presented as being equally un-politicized, situating the signifying elements of both *Hochelaga* and *Blue Bandana* deep within the postcolonial space, emphasizing difference without assumption. What the photographs are able to articulate is an urban hybridity that is subtle yet once framed becomes blatantly questionable. However, what makes the bandana and the wig the identifiably othered visual aspects is a matter of conditioning to recognize what is not the same, what is different in a perceivedly threatening or disturbing way.[3] As the bandana and the braids fill this role, they are also presented as being fused to the rest of the image, the dominant visual discourse.

In terms of artistic instinct, Migicovsky has expressed that his is based in aesthetic intuition and a subjective knowledge of what is immediately, visually appealing. That this appeal cannot be defined by the significantly captivating elements alone is indicative of a migratory aesthetic, the signifier which is the most alluring is both present and anonymous. The decision to capture an image is based in a relatability where losing clarity leads to a gain in insight.[4] Migration in this instance implies a condition of sentient engagement with a subject based in the interface featuring the intermobility of people as a given and at the focus of what is salient in a globalized existence.[5] This lends a more accurate theoretical framework to these particular representations of the Other as opposed to Homi K. Bhabha's coined "third space." Despite recognizing cultural difference over diversity, and that "culture is a signifying or symbolic activity,"[6] Bhabha favours what emerges in the hyphen itself by way of a hybrid identity (the "third space") as opposed to defining several original moments.[7] This space, non-synonymous with the migratory identity because of Bhabha's attachment to ambivalence, would be a poor way to reconcile the hybridity these photographs pronounce. Identity politics cannot be the sole answer to the problem posed by the migratory despite their importance in some situations.[8] Yes, other beneficial positions can emerge from the third space as a result of acknowledged hybridity, but for the purpose of recognizing a difference in colonial struggle and not negating it, with these pieces in particular, it is necessary to inquire within a context that highlights the inter-fragmentary dynamic between the visual signifiers.

At the nexus of the hybridities found in Hochelaga and Blue Bandana lies this migratory aesthetic where the combination of the differential community within the metropolis and the question of cultural authority within that urban narrative converge.[9] The extensions are draped across the eyes and face of the Motions poster, but interpretively, what the Other in Hochelaga is saying could range from a haranguing commentary on how hair should be, to a blind gesture of adoration to gestures of synergetic harmony. Even the massive industrial opportunity for products and "solutions" to afro-textured hair contains hierarchies that are linked to physical attractiveness and markers of socio-economic mobility.[10] During the 1990s, braids like the ones that are featured in Hochelaga were popularized by the availability of sprays, sheens and extensions by White-owned hair product companies.[11] Knowledge that Motions' intentions lie in advertising to women of colour and that the mere option of the dishevelled braids is a result of

marginalization of natural, afro-textured hair creates a parallel dynamic between the two cultural signifiers in Hochelaga.

If a candid view of the man in Blue Bandana was at all indicative of his cultural identity, the bandana could even be seen metaphorically as the self-recognition that is being oppressed, almost hidden by the more openly tolerated cap. Be it through association with gang membership or connotations to the handkerchief code among members of the gay male community, it is the most culturally loaded aspect of this faceless portrait as it is Othered through the Western aesthetic lexicon. Any discussion of an aesthetic presented as alternative within recognizable dominance (an aged white man) must be a cross cultural comparison.[12] Race, aesthetics and otherness must be understood as interconnected in order to employ the possibility to accommodate experiences of otherness and therefore distinguish between different kinds of others and different kinds of selves.[13]

The two entities that comprise each individual hybrid are consequentially the indications of a particular culture, however Hochelaga and Blue Bandana leave the resulting look of this variety up for interpretation, such is the existence of a hybrid. These are effectively paralleled as opposed to blurred and the subjects become existent within themselves, individual products - aesthetic entities drawing from their own experience and identity based in what is being borrowed and from where. Hochelaga and Blue Bandana do not confirm or deny the existence of these standalone features that enhance their complexity and aesthetic mobility - they are there as outwardly distinguishable facets, revealing and submerged at the same time.

[1] Mieke Bal, "Intention," in *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities: A Rough Guide*, (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 254.

[2] "Brand History," *Motions*, accessed October 23, 2013, <http://www.motionshair.com/about/brand-history.aspx>.

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[5] Bal, "Lost in Space," 24.

[6] Jonathan Rutherford. "The Third Space: Interview With Homi Bhabha," in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. Jonathan Rutherford, (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), 210.

[7] *Ibid.*, 211.

[8] Bal, "Lost in Space," 32.

[9] Rutherford, "The Third Space," 218.

[10] Cheryl Thompson, "Black Women, Beauty, and Hair as a Matter of Being," in *Women's Studies* 38 (2009): 843.

[11] *Ibid.*, 844.

[12] Gene H. Blocker, "Non-Western Aesthetics as a Colonial Invention," in *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 35 (2001): 3.

[13] Perina, "Encountering the Other."

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Men on the Margins: The Exclusionary Nature of Masculinity

- Text by: Hannah van der Est

The marginalization of masculinity is a phenomenon that is not frequently addressed because masculinity is often associated with power and privilege rather than with marginalization. However, the identity of the masculine is a very exclusive construction and therefore marginalizes many people. Any 'alternative' male body that falls outside of stereotypical masculine characteristics is considered less masculine or not masculine at all. It can be considered shameful to be an un-masculine male-bodied person. Although masculine bodies tend to be in a position of privilege, the inclusion of Alyse Tunnell's work, *Untitled*, in this exhibition addresses the marginalization of masculine bodies that is often invisible in our society.

Untitled is a somewhat ambiguous photograph which lends itself to numerous interpretations. The model depicted was raped and the artistic process of collaborating with the artist allowed him to express his experience of trauma and his masculinity on his own terms. The violence in the photograph is self-inflicted and can be read as an act of control and empowerment, suggesting the strength and power needed to overcome trauma. Victimization tends to be interpreted as a sign of weakness, subsequently threatening masculinity. In his book *The Politics of Victimization*, Robert Elias explains that "men ... often sustain a strong blow to their masculinity for having been unable to prevent their victimization".^[1] *Untitled* challenges the notion that victimization and vulnerability are synonymous with weakness and therefore cannot be masculine.

The act in the photograph can also be read as an expression of unbearable pain, guilt or shame. These complicated emotions can be linked to sexual assault as well as society's response towards the sexual assault of masculine bodies. In their book *Male Victims of Sexual Assault*, Gillian C. Mezey and Michael B. King explain the situation in this way:

"Male rape is a taboo subject; it happens but it is concealed by the victims who are too ashamed to speak out and by a society that is not prepared to listen. Men and boys who are sexually

assaulted...face scepticism, criticism, and disbelief, and there are very few sources of support or services specifically for them. Victim support agencies have traditionally regarded men as the perpetrators of abuse against women and these stereotypes and prejudices are hard to combat.”[2]

In an effort to combat such stereotypes and prejudices, Tunnell’s work exposes the subject of in an act of self-harm, which can be read as one of the harsh consequences of the marginalization of masculinities in discourses of sexual assault.

Social theorist Victor Jeleniewski Seidler discusses the challenges of creating a dialogue, in general, about issues of masculinity when writing:

“It was easier for us to perform our identities as men and theoretically explore connections between the ‘personal’ and the ‘political’ than it was to share our experience with others. This could feel too threatening because we were so used to a culture in which men would put each other down and in which a showing of vulnerability would be interpreted as a sign of weakness and so a threat to our male identities.” [3]

Thinking through Tunnell’s Untitled may work towards dismantling the concept that vulnerability is weakness and a threat to male identity. Although his posture shows confidence and power, the male subject occupies an extremely vulnerable position in the intimate space of his own bathroom as he performs an act which ostensibly emasculates him, a normatively unacceptable form of behavior. By capturing these characteristics that are supposedly contradictory, Tunnell’s photograph shows that society’s construction of masculinity is very limiting and as well as very limited.

The marginalization of ‘alternative’ masculinities has also been institutionalized and perpetuated by the state of Canada and the province of Quebec. Heterosexuality is a key characteristic of normative masculinity and to an extent sexuality is regulated by the state. From the 1950s until the 1990s homosexuals were considered a threat to national security and prosecuted.[4] Today, the expression of alternative masculinities, or any non-normative gender expression, continues to

be pushed to the margins. Canadian sociologist Gary Kinsman explains this phenomenon when he writes:

“In the contemporary period, queer people live a contradiction. On the one hand, our individual formal and abstract human rights are now increasingly recognized; on the other hand, our relationships often remain stigmatized and our sexualities and our desires are still censored, criminalized, and hated.”[5]

In the context of Quebec, the attitude that Kinsman articulates was exemplified by the Parti Québécois government in 2013 when it launched the Really Open campaign to fight homophobia. This campaign attempted to erase queer difference, portray LGBT people as nonsexual and suggested that their lives are the same as the lives of hetero-normative people.[6] According to the provincial government, homosexuality is acceptable as long as it is expressed in a normative way. Tunnell’s work does not directly address these issues of citizenship and the role of the government; I argue that the concerns surrounding masculinity are inherently linked to citizenship and are a part of a larger systemic problem. Although not directly responsible for the marginalization of the individual in the photograph, the state’s continued marginalization of alternative masculinities through discourses of hetero-normativity contributes to the emotion, tension and trauma experienced by the male subject.

Untitled is a powerful image that evokes a visceral response from its viewers. It is a valuable piece in this exhibition because it addresses a state enforced and largely invisible form of marginalization. Both the model and artist, recognize that they come from positions of privilege, and therefore had some concerns of taking up space in an exhibition dedicated to the representations of marginalization. The space dedicated to the discussion of the marginalization of people who also possess privilege must be carefully negotiated but this does not mean that their marginalization should be ignored or excluded from the space. Tunnell’s work may spark an important dialogue about the complicated issue of masculinity.

- [1] Robert Elias, *The Politics of Victimization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 116.
- [2] Gillian C. Mezey and Michael B. King, *Male Victims of Sexual Assault*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), v.
- [3] Victor Jeleniewski Seidler, "Masculinities, Histories and Memories," in *What is Masculinity?: Historical Dynamics from Antiquity to the Contemporary World*, ed. John H. Arnold and Sean Brady (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 434.
- [4] Gary Kinsman and Patrizia Gentile, *The Canadian War on Queers: National Security as Sexual Regulation* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010), xiii.
- [5] *Ibid.*, 394.
- [6] Jean Marois and Pauline Charest, "Forward" in *Does This Bother You?* (Montreal: Rats 9, 2013), 5.

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