

Volume 24 Number 3 \$5.50 A magazine about issues of art and culture

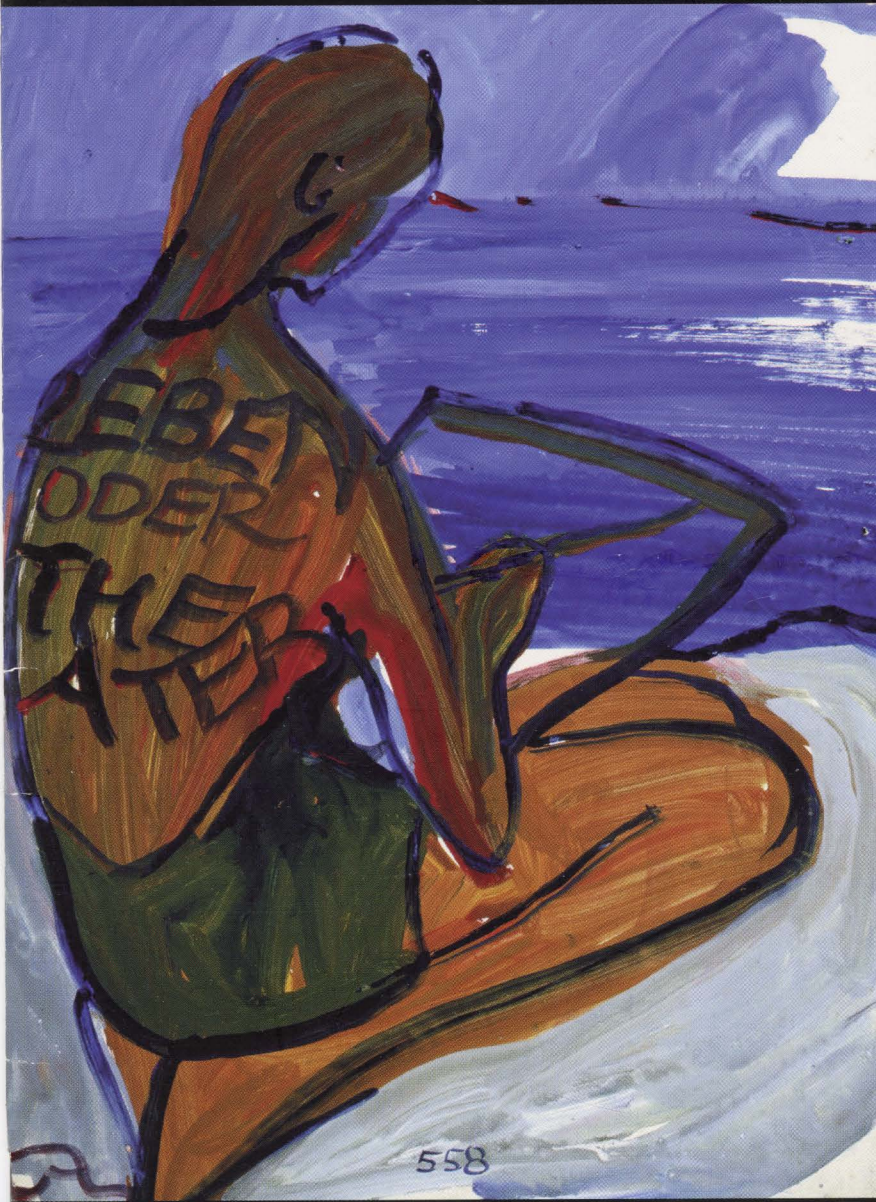
FUSE

MAGAZINE

Rummana Hussain's IN ORDER TO JOIN

by Jamelie Hassan

www.fusemagazine.org



**“Take good care
of it,
it is my whole
life”:** Encounters with
Charlotte Salomon's
address to the living

by Sharon Rosenberg

**“What if daily life in
Canada is boring?”:**
Contextualizing Greg Curnoe's
Regionalism by Dot Tuer



LIVE

biennial of performance art



www.livevancouver.bc.ca

A Collaboration by The Vancouver Art Gallery, grunt gallery, The Contemporary Art Gallery, Edgewise Electrolit Centre, Folly Gallery, Western Front, Video In, Artspeak, Or Gallery, FA³, Radix Theatre, Full Circle, Access Gallery, Helen Pitt Gallery, IMAG, Gallery Gachet, & Dynamo



grunt

THE GEORGIA STRAIGHT

INFORMATION 604.875.9516

OCTOBER 13 - NOVEMBER 30 2001

CENTRE DE DOCUMENTATION
ARTEXTE
DOCUMENTATION CENTRE

WHAT THE FUCK IS YOUR PROBLEM?

SUBMIT ALREADY!

mandate: to encourage contemporary artistic endeavours and to foster the development and exhibition of experimental art forms

20 slides + slide list
project description
video or audio tape (if necessary)
artist's statement
Curriculum Vitae
return postage
all media encouraged

for information contact:
Todd Jones
Latitude 53 Society of Artists
10137 - 104 Street
Edmonton AB T5J 0Z9
P • 780.423.5353
F • 780.424.9117
E • latitude53@interbaun.com
www.latitude53.org

No shame,
no gain.

Jake Moore hosts
the world's most
original short films.

SHAMELESS SHORTS
New season begins October 6th
Saturdays at 12:30 am ET
Sundays at Midnight ET

wtn
women's television network
www.wtn.ca

THE 5TH TORONTO REEL ASIAN INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL
november 15 - 24

TEN CENTS A DANCE (PARALLAX) BY MIMI ONODERA, 1985

- Artist Spotlight: Mimi Onodera
- International Spotlight: The New Japanese Cinema
- Special Co-presentation with the HKETO: New work from Hong Kong
- Plus new films from Canada, USA, and around the world

Tickets on sale November 1st at

- Pages Books and Magazines, 256 Queen Street West
- Reel Asian office, 80 Spadina Avenue Suite 205

toronto **reel Asian** international film festival

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
416.703.9333 info@reelasian.com www.reelasian.com

aka
EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY
AKA Artist-Run Centre
invites applications for the position of: **Administrative Coordinator**
Remuneration: \$2204/month plus benefits.
Based on 32 hours per week; 10 months per year

Application Deadline: November 15, 2001

AKA is a not-for-profit, artist-run centre whose purpose is to support growth, development and exploration in the arts. The preferred applicant will be a working artist and have experience with Artist-run centres and/or the public gallery system, contemporary art in a variety of disciplines and art theory.

Responsibilities include: duties related to the operations of a publicly funded/ non-profit organization, supervision of gallery financial management, preparation of funding applications, reports, budgets and financial statements, participation in programme planning, assistance with exhibition installation, research of new funding sources and assisting the Board with fundraising ventures.

The ideal candidate will possess strong organizational skills as well as the ability to demonstrate independent initiative within a collective decision-making environment. Computer skills are an asset particularly experience with Microsoft Word, Excel, and Simply Accounting. The position is one of two positions within a non-hierarchical, equity staff structure. The two employees are considered a team with somewhat integrated job descriptions.

This is a 10 month contract with the possibility of renewal.
Please address applications to:

The Hiring Committee, AKA Artist-Run Centre
12 — 23rd Street East, 3rd floor
Saskatoon, SK S7K 0H5

DEADLINE: NOVEMBER 15, 2001
Please include 2-3 letters of reference with your application.
For more information, call (306) 652-0044

AKA is committed to the principles of equal access and equal opportunity.

FUSE

MAGAZINE

Volume 24 Number 3 September 2001

Editorial Board

Janice Andrae, R. William Hill, Michelle Jacques, Marilyn Jung, Francine Périnet, Meera Sethi, Renuka Sooknanan, Shawn Syms, Rinaldo Walcott

Contributing Editors

Joane Cardinal-Schubert (Calgary), Robin Curtis (Berlin), Allan deSouza (Los Angeles), Cliff Eyland (Winnipeg), Andrea Fatona (Peterborough), Sylvie Fortin (Ottawa), Richard Fung (Toronto), Anne Golden (Montreal), Tere Badia (De Calor Magazine, Barcelona), Ashok Mathur (Calgary), Ian Rashid (London), Clive Robertson (Montreal), Nell Tenhaaf (Toronto), Reggie Woolery (New York)

Staff

Christina Starr (Managing Editor)
Suzanne Noga (Design)
Patti Kim (Webzine Intern)
vashti (Advertising Coordinator)
J. Baines Pollard (Circulation Coordinator)

Special thanks to Richard Hill, Meera Sethi, Renuka Sooknanan, Marilyn Jung, Michelle Jacques, Mary Anne Coffey, Janice Andrae and Rinaldo Walcott for copy editing. Thanks also to Shawn Syms for proof-reading, to Emily Andrae for design of the Artist's Project and to Janice Andrae for image research.

FUSE is published four times a year by Artons Cultural Affairs Society and Publishing Inc., a non-profit artists' organization. Our offices are located at 401 Richmond Street West, suite 454, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5V 3A8. E-mail: fuse@interlog.com, website: www.fusemagazine.org, tel: (416) 340-8026, fax: (416) 340-0494. All newsstand inquiries should be sent to this address. PAP Registration No. 8623.

Copyright © 2001 Artons Publishing Inc. All rights reserved under International Copyright Union. Any reproduction without permission is prohibited. Send permission requests to CANCOPY, (416) 868-1620. Artons Publishing purchases First North American Serial Rights and copyright reverts to the writer after publication. Artons Publishing assumes no responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts. Manuscripts not accompanied by a stamped self-addressed envelope will not be returned. A copy of our Writers' Guidelines is available on request. Publication of an advertisement in FUSE does not include endorsement of the advertiser by the magazine. Opinions expressed outside of specifically marked editorials are not necessarily held by members of the Editorial Board.

Subscription rates: \$20 per year, Institutions \$32 per year (in Canada only). Outside Canada \$24 U.S. per year, Institutions \$38 U.S. Decisions regarding who qualifies as an individual subscriber remain the right of the publisher. Printed in Canada on recycled, acid-free paper.

ISSN 0838-603X

FUSE is indexed in the Alternative Press Index and is distributed by, and a member of, the Canadian Magazine Publisher's Association, 130 Spadina Ave., suite 202, Toronto, Ontario M5V 2L4, tel: (416) 504-0274, fax: (416) 504-0437. FUSE is a member of the Independent Press Association, San Francisco. FUSE acknowledges financial assistance from the Canada Council for the Arts, the Ontario Arts Council, the Cultural Human Resources Council and the Department of Canadian Heritage through the Publications Assistance Program, in addition to the many hours of volunteer and partially paid labour that are provided by everyone listed on our masthead.



Conseil des Arts du Canada
The Canada Council



ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL
CONSEIL DES ARTS DE L'ONTARIO

6 Editorial

10 Column

**"What if daily life in Canada is boring?":
Contextualizing Greg Curnoe's Regionalism**
by Dot Tuer

14 Feature

Rummana Hussain's In Order to Join
by Jamelie Hassan

18 Artist Project

**Jill Culiner
from La Mémoire Effacée**

20 Feature

**"Take good care of it, it is my whole life":
Encounters with Charlotte Salomon's
address to the living**
by Sharon Rosenberg

40 Short Fuse

Persistent Misses
by Jill Arie

contents

Reviews

VISUAL ART

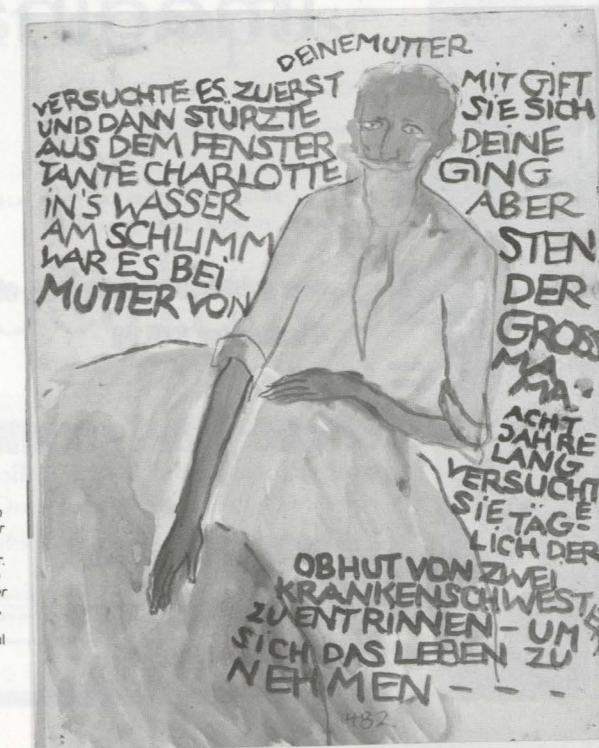
30 **Study Skins**
Review by Scott Sorli

32 **a better place**
Review Christine Shaw

35 **breathtaking: Sue Lloyd's
searchworks/chest cavity**
Review Janice Andrae

BOOKS

38 **Other Conundrums:
Race, Culture, and Canadian Art**
Review by Meera Sethi



"Your mother tried it with poison, then she threw herself out the window. Your Aunt Charlotte drowned herself, but the worst case was Grandma's mother. For eight years she tried every day to escape the care of two nurses in order to take her life...". Charlotte Salomon, 1940-42, from *Life? or Theatre?*. Courtesy of Collection Jewish Historical Museum, Amsterdam. Copyright Charlotte Salomon Foundation.

CENTRE DE DOCUMENTATION
ARTEXTE
DOCUMENTATION CENTRE

WHAT IF DAILY LIFE IN
CANADA IS BORING ??
& WHAT IF I AM NOT A-
WARE OF WHAT IS INT-
ERESTING TO OTHERS
ABOUT MY LIFE ??

What if daily life in Canada is boring?, Greg Curnoe, 23 March 1987, gouache, watercolour, stamp-pad ink, pastel on woven paper, 117.8 cm x 190.5 cm. Courtesy of Art Gallery of Ontario (Gift of Sheila Curnoe, London, Ontario, 1997).

Sept 7 - Oct 13/01
Opening Reception:
Fri, Sept. 7/ 7-9 pm

Cover: *Life or Theatre?*, Charlotte Salomon, 1900-42, from her autobiographical work *Life? or Theatre?* including over 1300 gouache paintings and texts. Photo: Jewish Historical Museum, Amsterdam. Courtesy of Collection Jewish Historical Museum, Amsterdam. Copyright Charlotte Salomon Foundation.

WALTER PHILLIPS GALLERY

Multiples
Tsa' de yoh do's

AUGUST 8 - SEPTEMBER 30, 2001
Curator: Tom Hill

Billy's Vision
a project by Andrew Hunter

OCTOBER 13 - NOVEMBER 25, 2001
organized and circulated by The Mendel Art Gallery

Wildlife: a field guide
to the post-natural

DECEMBER 8 - JANUARY 27, 2002
Curator: Lisa Gabrielle Mark
organized and circulated by
The Museum for Textiles

GALLERY HOURS
Tuesday to Sunday
noon to five

tel 403-762-6281
fax 403-762-6659

www.banffcentre.ca/wpg

Box 1020-14, Banff AB
Canada T0L 0C0

The Walter Phillips Gallery
is supported, in part,
by the Canada Council for
the Arts and the Alberta
Foundation for the Arts.



est nord est artist residencies >>

Call for submissions / 2002/03 Programming

Est-Nord-Est invites visual artists to submit their
proposals for the following residency periods :

Spring / summer / autumn 2002
and spring 2003

Deadlines :
2001 October 30 and 2002 February 28

Informations :
(418) 598-6363 / estne@globetrotter.net



Centre Est-Nord-Est, 335 avenue de Gaspé O,
St-Jean-Port-Joli, Québec G0R 3G0 Fax : (418) 598-7071

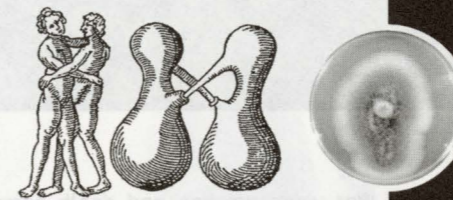


EXHIBITION

Artist: Annie Thibault

Title:
Animalcules et
dessins obscurs

Dates: September 19
to October 21, 2001



Galerie d'art de l'Université Bishop's / Art Gallery of Bishop's University
Rue College Street, Lennoxville, (Québec) J1M 1Z7
T.(819) 822-9600 ext. 2260 www.ubishops.ca/ccc/cultural/mission.htm

Hours: Tuesday to Sunday 12pm to 5pm and all evenings when
Centennial Theatre is open

25.08.01
• 28.10.01



DANIEL OLSON
Philosophical Moments
Curated
by Marnie Fleming
at Centennial Square

01.09.01
• 04.11.01



SHUI-BO WANG
Sunrise Over Tiananmen Square
Curated
by Marnie Fleming
in Gairloch Gardens

17.11.01
• 20.01.02



CONSTRUCTION COMPULSION
Reconfiguring the
Permanent Collection
Curated by Shannon Anderson
at both locations

oakville galleries

Centennial Square T: 905.844.4402
120 Navy Street F: 905.844.7968
Gairloch Gardens oakvillegalleries.com
1306 Lakeshore Road East oakgalleries@idirect.com

ignite your
imagination

new subscribers save 40% off the cover price
4 issues for \$15.00

subscribe today

www.fusemagazine.org

416.340.8026

FUSE

MAGAZINE

conscious • critical analysis • contemporary art • community based

RENÉE GREEN, DOUG HALL, BRIAN JUNGEN, GARY KIBBINS,
JOACHIM KOESTER, KERRY JAMES MARSHALL, JEAN-LUC MOULÈNE

Présent composé

05.07.01-16.09.01

Curator: Sylvie Fortin

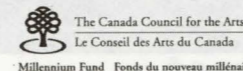
CHANTAL DAHAN, NICHOLA FELDMAN-KISS, CAROLINE LANGILL,
MARIE-JEANNE MUSIOL, TRÂM VO

Localities

27.09.01-06.01.02

Curator: Sylvie Fortin

The Ottawa Art Gallery | La Galerie d'art d'Ottawa
2 Daly, Ottawa, Ontario K1N 6E2 (613) 233-8699
fax (613) 569-7660 www.cyberus.ca/~oag



oagAO

Sept. 7 - Oct. 13/01
Opening Reception:
Fri. Sept. 7/ 7-9 pm

Shinobu Akimoto w/
Mathew Evans,
Adrian Blackwell, BOSS,
Greg Hefford, Luis Jacob w/
Mark Connery, Simone Moir,
Si Si Penaloza, Kika Thorne,
Will Munro,
Curated by Peter Kingstone, Jinhan Ko,
Jennifer Papararo

Hilando Fino
Oct. 20 - Nov. 24/01
Curated by Amelia Jimenez

WATCH FOR OUR 30TH ANNIVERSARY
EVENTS IN NOVEMBER! AND OUR
MEMBERS SHOW IN DECEMBER!

A Space acknowledges the generous contributions of our
Membership and of the following agencies:



ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL
CONSEIL DES ARTS DE L'ONTARIO



THE CANADA COUNCIL
FOR THE ARTS
DEPUIS 1937

torontocouncil
An arts agency of the City of Toronto



401 RICHMOND STREET WEST #110
SPACE
TORONTO ONTARIO M5V 3A8
T:416-979-9633 F:416-979-9683
WWW.ASPACEGALLERY.ORG

Editorial

How do viewers respond to exhibition sights/sites?

For the individual writers featured in this issue, visual sights are sites of active knowledge-making with the potential for social and political change. In our feature essay "Take good care of it, it is my whole life": Encounters with Charlotte Salomon's address to the living," Sharon Rosenberg discusses viewers' encounters with the travelling exhibition *Life? or Theatre?*

The works in this exhibition, some 400, were selected from the entire collection of Salomon's work in storage at the Jewish Historical Museum in Amsterdam. From October 1998 to March 2001, Rosenberg followed Salomon's work as it was exhibited in Toronto, Boston, New York and London, England. She spent days amongst Salomon's viewers, observing responses to the work in the context of these different locations.

Not only does Salomon's work bear witness to the experiences of the compelling existence that she and other "unacceptable" peoples lived during the Holocaust, these sights become bridges for engaging with, not forgetting, a lasting knowledge of the effects of hate and prejudice on daily lives.

Our artist project contributed by Jill Culiner, a Canadian artist based in France, traces the vanishing memories of Jewish communities. Her photographic pairings, together with journal entries of her travels to various locations — battlefields from the

First World War, concentration and death camps — provide sights marked by absence(s).

Two maps, one from 1972 made by London Regionalist artist Greg Curnoe, another made forty years earlier by Joaquin Torres-Garcia, an artist from the Rioplatense region of Uruguay, provide Dot Tuer with an opportune site from which to reconsider Curnoe's later work in "a context that is transnational and embedded in questions of colonization and culture that mark the historical legacies of the Americas."

Jamelie Hassan speaks about "how revisiting apparently familiar sites" can be "profoundly altered by [an] intense focus." She responds to the installation by the late Rummana Hussain, *In Order to Join*, exhibited in New York at Art in General in 1998. As she re-visits the sight/site of Hussain's installation, she locates recollections in familiar details and sensory associations that carry Hussain's political message forward.

The reviews consider how visual sights/sites affect ways of thinking. These writers interrogate visual practices of representation and museum presentation. They consider the interplay between exhibition sites and social contexts, and offer their informed readings to you, the reader.

What is your response?

FUSE ART

Online Directory
Link into hundreds of contemporary Canadian art and media groups.

www.fusemagazine.org

416.340.7221 or
events@fusemagazine.org
to make sure your
organization is not left out.

Lisa Deanne Smith
Clint Griffin

*in order to know them better
i invite them into my world*

installation

September 7 - October 18

Opening reception September 7, 7pm. Artists will be in attendance.



Clint Griffin, *Happy Birthday*, 2001

gallery connexion

453 Queen St (At the rear of the Justice Building)
Fredericton, New Brunswick
Gallery hours 12-4 pm, Tues-Fri or by appointment
T: 506.454.1433 F: 506.454.1401 connex@bnet.nb.ca
Supported by the Canada Council for the Arts

September 12 – October 13
Opening on Wednesday, September 12, 8 – 10pm

Videocentric
Emmanuelle Antille, Isabelle Hayeur, Curtis MacDonald, Michael Mazière, Jürgen Moritz and Norbert Pfaffenbichler, Jeroen Offerman, Atsushi Ogata, Cath Prior, Lisa Steele, Jane Wright
Curated by VVV – Dara Gellman + Leslie Peters

and

Angel Dust
Jeremy Blake

October 24 – November 24
Opening on Wednesday, October 24, 8 – 10pm

TV dinner with landscape:
Lois Andison, Jill Ballard, deco dawson, David Krippendorf, Jennifer McMackon, Tanya Read, Althea Thauberger, Justin Waddell
Curated by Kym Pruesse + Scott Sorli

YYZ Artists' Outlet
401 Richmond St. West
Suite 140
Toronto, Ontario
M5V 3A8
tel/416.598.4546 fax/416.598.2282
yyz@yyzartistsoutlet.org
www.yyzartistsoutlet.org

YYZ

YYZ is supported by its members, the Canada Council for the Arts, the Ontario Arts Council and the City of Toronto through the Toronto Arts Council.

LEFT words

Join us for the 3rd annual
LeftWords Festival of Books and Ideas!

Come mingle, listen to readings, attend a workshop,
meet authors, publishers, activists, browse, hear some
music, win or buy some books and magazines!

Ann Hansen, "Direct Action: memoirs of an urban guerrilla"
Pat Armstrong, "Exposing Privatization: women and health Care
Reform in Canada"

Authors from "Resist re: the Quebec FTAA summit"

Allyson Mitchell, Lisa Bryn Rundle, Lara Karaian,

"Turbo Chicks: Talking Young Feminisms"

VixSpooky with a zine making workshop

Tessa Hebb, "Working Capital"

Leo Panitch and the launch of Socialist Register 2002

and much more!

FREE!

Sunday, November 4th, 11:00-5:00

New College (Spadina & Harbord) Toronto, Ontario

www.leftwords.org

David Burkes, B. Com, C.A. Chartered Accountant

Auditing for not-for-profits, personal taxes, accounting.
Specializing in art and cultural organizations,
artists and cultural workers.

tel (905) 882-0497 fax (905) 882-0499

30 Wertheim Court, Unit 14

Richmond Hill, Ontario L4B 1B9

We provide affordable video production facilities,
media arts training, production funding awards and
public screenings to communities throughout
South Western Ontario.

Ed Video

media arts centre

16A Wyndham St. N, P.O. Box 1629, Guelph, ON. N1H 6R7

T: [519] 836.9811 F: [519] 836.0504

edvideo@albedo.net

www.albedo.net/edvideo

Ed Video acknowledges the generous support of its members, the Canada Council for the Arts & the Ontario Arts Council

Cliff Eyland: File Card Sort
Cindy Baker: No Word of a Lie

October 18 to
November 24, 2001



Art Gallery of
Southwestern Manitoba

638 Princess Avenue · BRANDON · Manitoba · R7A 0P3
204-727-1036 · agsm@mb.sympatico.ca



Cliff Eyland

DIGITAL IMAGING & PRINTING

CENTURY

Your Digital Imaging Expert

Offset Printing - 25" Press • Desktop Publishing •
PC & Mac Imaging Film • Large Format Poster • Colour
Proofing • Drum Scanning • Full Bindery Service
404 Adelaide Street West (Adelaide & Spadina)

(416) 504-2387

musicworks

for the

Ear eye mind

and . . .

Subscribe today: 416-977-3546 • www.musicworks.ca

INTERACCESS

electronic media arts centre

www.interaccess.org

SUBMISSION DEADLINES:
March 1 and September 1

401 Richmond Street West, Suite 444
Toronto, ON, Canada M5V 3A8
416.599.7206

EXPANDING THE CULTURAL SPACE OF TECHNOLOGY

TEMPORARY ART CONTEMPORARY ART CO
MPORARY ART CONTEMPORARY ART CONT

<SITE>
GALLERY

55 ARTHUR ST., WINNIPEG, MB R3B 1H1 PH/FAX (204) 942-1618
OPEN TUES.-SAT. 11AM-4PM www.pangea.ca/site

internet design & development

- @ web site design
- @ internet access
- @ web site hosting
- @ custom solutions

everything

you need

to get

DISCOVERED

- < online galleries >
- < online portfolios >
- < online collaborations >
- < online exhibitions >

t 416.665.3566

f 416.665.8285

e info@coolwater.ca

i www.coolwater.ca

coolwater

“What if daily life in Canada is boring?”

: Contextualizing Greg Curnoe’s Regionalism

by Dot Tuer

In December 1988, I met Jamelie Hassan and Ron Benner in Cuba, where they were organizing an exhibition of London Regionalist artists and I was attending the Cuban Film Festival. That year Perestroika was at its height: the street lamps still worked; the buses ran. Havana was abuzz with a generation of artists whose work had matured with the revolution, engaging conceptual strategies that explored Cuba’s daily life, both official and illicit. The Hotel Nacional, where I stayed in the centre of Havana, was hosting a troop of Soviet factory workers rewarded for their productivity with a week’s vacation on America’s only Communist island. The workers, who never left the hotel, began their day with early morning swims in the frigid pool and ended it with late night drinking bouts in the hotel bar. I was a little more adventurous, alternating film watching with long walks through old Havana and free-fall intellectual discussions with Cuban artists that lasted late into the tropical night.

Down the street from the Hotel Nacional, the London Regionalist artists from Canada were exhibiting at La Casa de Las Americas, a centre whose publishing programs, art shows and library had been a major political and cultural reference for Latin Americans since the revolution. The poster for the exhibition featured Greg Curnoe’s map of the Americas. Based on a work by André Breton, Curnoe’s map excised the United States from standard cartography, conjoining Canada and Mexico as neighbours to fuse Canadian nationalism with a north/south re-orientation. In the gallery, beside one of Murray Favro’s sculptural bicycles, hung a large letter-stamp painting by Curnoe. It read:

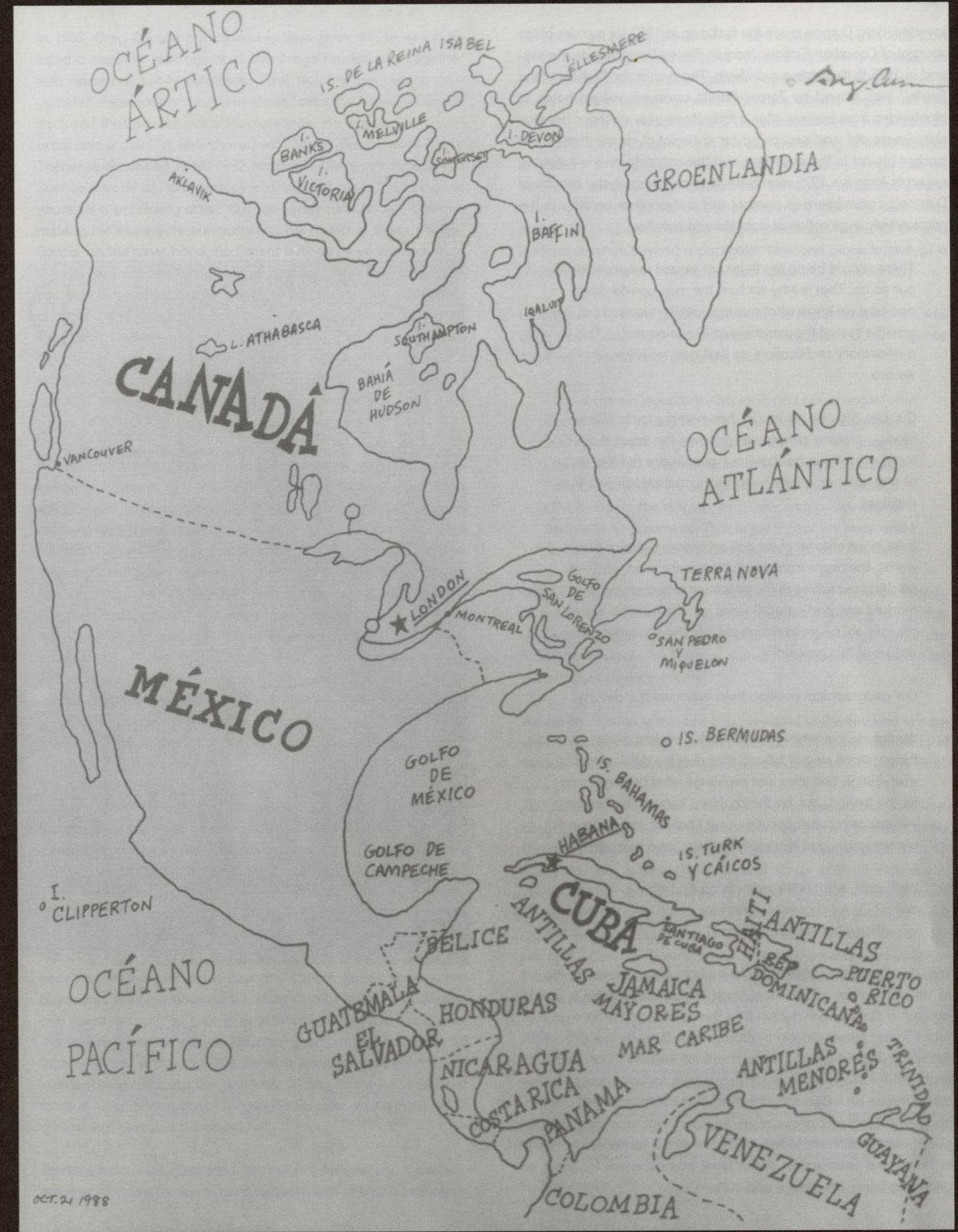
“What if daily life in Canada is boring?
and what if I am not aware of what is
interesting to others about my life?”

In 1992, Greg Curnoe died when hit from behind by a truck while bicycling. At that time, Cuba was entering what is euphemistically known as the “Special Period.” With the political disintegration of the Soviet Union, Cuba experienced severe economic deprivation. The Soviet Union was Cuba’s major trading partner, in which the exchange of sugar for oil and massive subsidies had enabled Cuba to guarantee its citizens basic food and shelter and to build the best health care and education system in the developing

world. Without oil, the buses no longer ran; the street lamps didn’t work; there was no gasoline for the American vintage cars that Cubans had kept running since the revolution in 1959. To get around, Cubans began to use bicycles, chaotically careening through the dark city streets. In retrospect, I can’t help thinking that Curnoe would have loved the sight of this local adaptation to global isolation.

In 2001, when I asked to participate in a panel entitled “Regionalism and Internationalism” for a symposium on Greg Curnoe, his map from the Havana exhibition was the first thing that came to mind. Since my encounter with Curnoe’s remapping of the Americas, I had discovered another artwork that also questioned the dominance of the United States over the continent. Forty years before Curnoe, Joaquín Torres-García, an artist from the Rioplatense region of Uruguay, created a map in which he inverted the poles to place the southern cone at the top of the world. I had always wanted to show these two maps together, and they became my cultural signposts for the panel text reproduced below. Although I never met Greg Curnoe, it seemed fitting to the theme of the panel that the first time I saw his work internationally was in Cuba, before the fall of the Berlin Wall, NAFTA, FTAA, G8 summits and a corporate platform for global integration.

I would like to address the questions of regionalism and internationalism — questions that in an era of globalization, depending on your perspective, appear either to loom enormously or to fade into irrelevance — with two maps of the Americas. In one the United States is missing; in the other, the north and south poles are



Map of North America, Greg Curnoe, 1988, Spanish version produced for the exhibition poster for the Casa de las Américas, Havana, Cuba, printed in pink ink without exhibition text, based on original ink drawing of Map of North America, 1972. Courtesy of Archives of Ron Benner and Jamelie Hassan.

inverted. Greg Curnoe made the first map in 1972 for a cover of the *Journal of Canadian Fiction*; Joaquín Torres-García made the second in 1935 to illustrate a manifesto. The manifesto, "School of the South," was issued by Torres-García upon his return home to Montevideo from Europe after a forty-three-year absence. He was sixty years old and searching for a regional reality that would anchor his art to the everyday and the concrete. In the following excerpts from his 1935 manifesto, one can hear many echoes of Curnoe's commitment in another era and another country to the same artistic exploration of local life and practice:

There should be no North for us, except in opposition to our south. That is why we turn the map upside down, and now we know what our true position is, and not the way the rest of the world would like to have it.... This is a necessary rectification; so that now we know where we are.

....
Our city, the one we live in, has nothing to do with any other ... looking closely, we discover the inner character of everything because our people are not like those of any other city; they have as much character as the city itself.

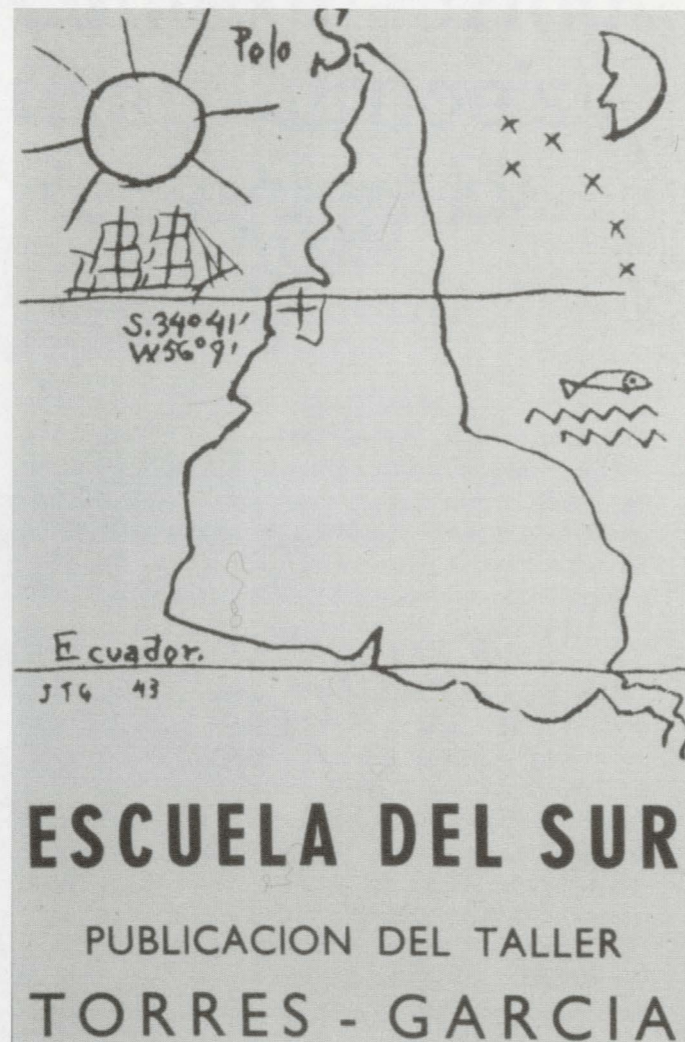
....
If we move onto what we call expression, choice of words, the angle from which things are seen, etc., we also find ourselves in the presence of something very marked and particular. So that just by listening to people talk, we begin to penetrate into the idiosyncratic nature of this population.

....
Our geographical position then indicates our destiny.

....
We can do everything (now I'm referring to the vital things, those we call telluric, that give the right aspect to everything); and then, not exchange what belongs to us for the foreign, but, on the contrary, convert the foreign into our own substance. Because I believe that the epoch of colonialism and importation is over, and so away!

....
Well, then, what is the artist to do and what is he doing? He must remain conscious of the world without forgetting what is close at hand.¹

With this manifesto, Torres-García anchored his passion for his art in an affirmation of the local that, much like Curnoe's, railed against a staid provincialism and the dominance of foreign culture. Sadly, Torres-García's attempt to influence the provincial Rioplatense public, with its penchant for imported European art and post-Impressionist landscapes, was a failure during his lifetime. Despite an outpouring of work, and the founding of a workshop and local art association, many artists and most of the public were indifferent to his insistence that a fundamental reorientation and valorization of the local was essential for the creation of a living, breathing, vital culture.



Escuela del Sur (School of the South), Joaquín Torres-García, 1935. Courtesy of Dot Tuer.

In 1989, Greg Curnoe published his Blue Book #8, in which he listed a negative topology of all the things he was not. Together with names of family members, First Nations' peoples, avant-gardist movements and twentieth century "isms," Curnoe declared that he was not a Rioplatense. He was, however, an artist and a catalyst who shared with Torres-García what Pierre Théberge described in his 1982 National Gallery retrospective of Curnoe's work as "an ideology of time and place."² During his years as a practising artist, Curnoe rarely left London, Ontario, making his immediate surroundings his object of study. Torres-García, on the other hand, had spent forty-three years away from the city he would embrace toward the end of his life as the conceptual centre of his artistic practice. Yet despite their differences of context and geography and circumstance, both envisioned an art in which experience anchored observation. Later in their lives, both sought out an indigenous history to answer Northrop Frye's famous question, "Where is here?" Torres-García embraced the spiritual framework of the Inca empire; Curnoe excavated the traces of a First Nations presence in the environs of London.

In their passion for the local and the specific, their recognition of indigenous history as "the underpinning of culture"³ and their redrawing of conceptual boundaries of reception through strategies of inversion, Torres-García and Curnoe offer a genealogy of regionalism and internationalism that is markedly different from the global erasure of the local that frames a contemporary "new internationalism" in art, in which the numbing sameness of international Biennials feature artists who come from different parts of the world but whose work is readable due to the uniform adoption of an international style. In linking these two artists, I would propose another kind of internationalism, one that is not hemmed in by the mythology of national unity nor unhinged by a fluid transmigration of ideas and artists but framed by the dynamics of local cultures marking a time and place to communicate across time and place.

If we isolate Curnoe as a Canadian artist who championed the regional in his idiosyncratic attachment to everyday life, then his work becomes marked by the singularities of history. He becomes a nationalist whose ideas were swept away by a wave of globalization, an artist whose commitment to the local has come and gone with the vagaries of art world fashion. If, on the other hand, Curnoe's work is viewed in a context that is transnational and embedded in questions of colonization and culture that mark the historical legacies of the Americas, then his artwork affirms the possibility of envisioning a dialogue that engages regionalism beyond its national boundaries. Greg Curnoe was no ideologue, and there is much to pick fault with in terms of his intellectual framework if one so wishes. He also claims in his Blue Book #8 that he is not a utopian. Yet there is something utopian in his insistence on affirming the regional, finding in the local, like the famous Argentinean writer Jorge Luis Borges, an Aleph, a small sphere that revealed the universe.⁴

Torres-García was dismissed during his lifetime as a utopian dreamer; his contribution to constructivism was at best a footnote in

European art history. However, in recent decades, Latin American artists from many countries have revisited his work and ideas; his notion of the local has been reflected upon and rethought within a contemporary artistic context. Curnoe's artistic legacy at this moment does not reach beyond Canadian borders; his work has not merited even a footnote in the current writing of international art history. In response to this lack of recognition, I hope that we can begin to reflect upon and rethink the legacy of Curnoe's commitment to the regional as something more than the sum of its parts, and in so doing envision regionalism as a model for art and life that reaches beyond a particular time and place to give us a concrete sense of an internationalism specific to the Americas.

Borges, who wrote a great deal about the region in which he was born and lived, made an interesting argument about Buenos Aires and its environs, declaring that:

There are no legends in this land and not a single ghost walks through our streets. This is our disgrace. Our lived reality is grandiose yet the life of our imagination is paltry.... Buenos Aires is now more than a city, it is a country, and we must find the poetry, the music, the painting, the religion, and the metaphysics appropriate to its greatness. That is the size of my hope and I invite you all to become gods to work for its fulfillment.⁵

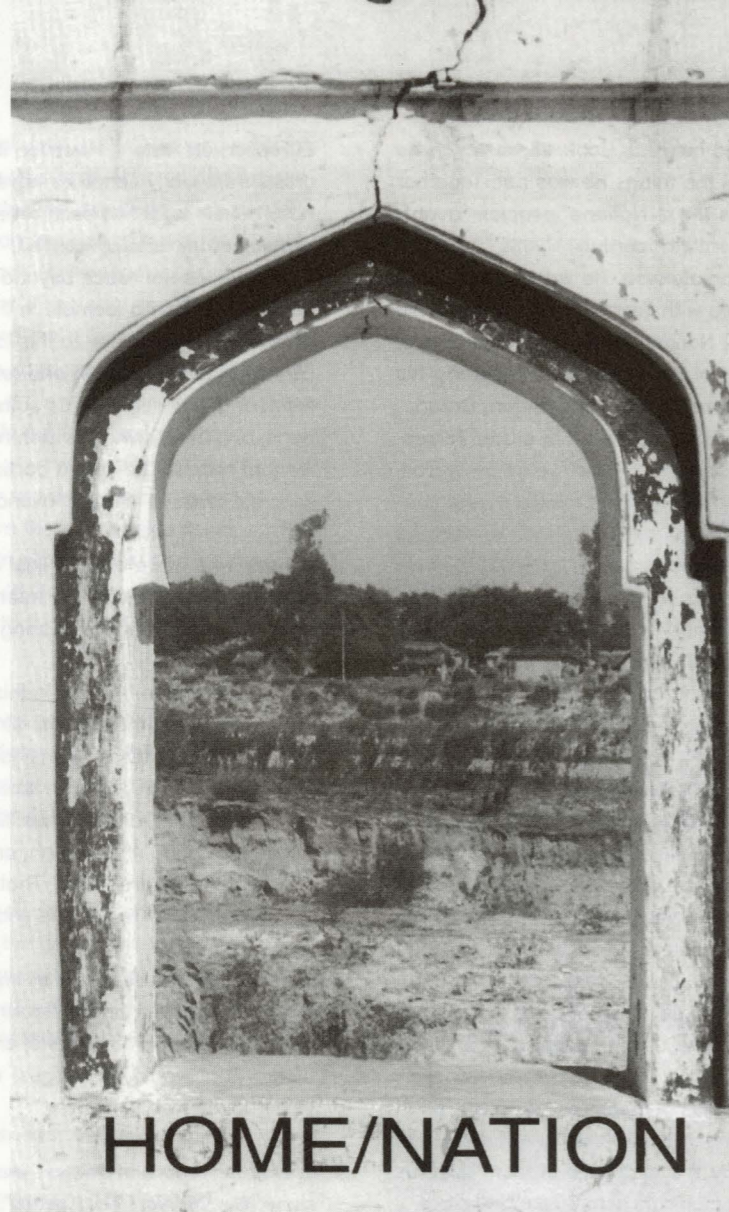
Now Curnoe was certainly an imperfect God, yet in his own milieu he was a larger-than-life figure, dedicated to finding the ghosts that walk through our streets, and to creating a language for our history that would, in Borges' words, "bequeath an illusionary yesterday to men's memory."⁶

An earlier version of this text was presented at the day long symposium "We Are Not Greg Curnoe", May 12, 2001 at the Art Gallery of Ontario in conjunction with the exhibition Greg Curnoe: Life & Stuff.

Dot Tuer is a writer and cultural historian whose work addresses issues of postcolonialism, art, and technology. She is a professor at the Ontario College of Art and Design, and a frequent guest lecturer. Currently, she is finishing a doctoral thesis at the University of Toronto which examines how the clash of world views between European and indigenous peoples in the colonial Americas have shaped modern ideas of nature and culture. Most recently, she received a Canada Council Senior Artist's Grant to begin research on a book that will bring this examination of nature and culture to a discussion on contemporary Canadian art.

Notes

- 1 A translation of Joaquín Torres-García's manifesto can be found in Dawn Ades, *Art in Latin America* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989), pp. 320-322.
- 2 Pierre Théberge, *Greg Curnoe* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1982), p. 9.
- 3 Greg Curnoe, *Deeds/Abstracts* (London, Ontario: Brick Books, 1995), p. 25.
- 4 "The Aleph," by Jorge Luis Borges, is the story of a mysterious sphere located in a cellar of a Buenos Aires house in which one can see the infinity of consciousness and the eternity of the universe. *The Aleph and Other Stories: 1933-1969*. (New York: Bantam Books, 1970).
- 5 Cited in Beatriz Sarlo, *Jorge Luis Borges: A Writer on the Edge* (London & New York: Verso, 1993), p. 20.
- 6 Cited in Sarlo, p. 23.



Detail from *HOMENATION*, Rummana Hussain, 1996, installation, photographic images, written text, objects. Photo: Chandita Mukherji. Courtesy of Gallery Chemould, Bombay, India.

Rummana Hussain's In Order to Join

by Jamelie Hassan



Lift Bridge, Port Stanley, Ontario, 2000. Photo: Jamelie Hassan.

"I was on the bridge," said Beloved. "You see me on the bridge?"

— Toni Morrison

In 1939, the construction of the lift bridge in Port Stanley, Ontario, was completed. A commemorative plaque to the eight workers who lost their lives during its construction marks the bridge. In writing this essay about Rummana Hussain's work, *In Order to Join* (1998) it is difficult not to write in a commemorative mode.

The bridge is a powerful link in its relationship to life and death and as an everyday feature found in diverse locations. In the installation *In Order to Join*, the bridge is the Queensborough Bridge in New York. Unlike the Queensborough Bridge, however, the lift bridge in Port Stanley is located at the entry to a modest harbour on the Canadian side of Lake Erie, a fresh water lake celebrated for its fish. The lift bridge has the mechanical ability to separate and divide itself in half. Lifting each half skyward, it startles the walker and momentarily yet abruptly impedes her passage: a rupture distinct and real — the bridge no longer a bridge. Then it mechanically lowers each of its halves "in order to join," to become a bridge again.

The Queensborough Bridge, situated in the metropolis of New York City, is a significant marker — not only because of its physical linking aspect, but also because of the large South Asian/North American population that defines the neighbourhood as one crosses the East River from Manhattan.

Continuing this comparison of bridges and locations, there exists in Port Stanley a surprising miniature expression in relationships of cultural geography. Nearby the lift bridge, sandwiched between fresh fish-and-chip outlets and a few tourist boutiques, is a closet-size shop, "Enter India." Full of everything from homemade samosas, neem toothpaste, sandalwood fragrant soaps, incense, silks, cottons and embroideries, this shop is quite like the images that accompany Hussain's installation of her still photos, presented on the gallery walls.

In Order to Join further develops the sense of passage through the use of multiple media: a projected image in real-time of her walking across the Queensborough Bridge; hanging embroidered veils; audio of sound fragments of jazz and a busy city street; colour photos of market scenes; a silent video monitor of her stoically receiving her hospital treatment. Each of these distinct elements addresses the fragmentary nature of Rummana Hussain's immediate reality and makes visible the treatment of cancer and the pain of the disease. The site of the hospital and the ordeal of treatment unfold in the video sequence directly and without drama.

The topic of cancer has gone through many metaphors in the hands of artists. Both artists and caregivers now favour the metaphor of journey over the metaphor of battle. *In Order to Join* brings the journey into a multi-layered space, powerfully represented by the artist while a video projection records her slow walk across the Queensborough Bridge.



Video still from *In Between*, Rummana Hussain, 1998, 28 min. Courtesy of Art in General, New York.

Bombay, March 1999

I am sitting beside Rummana. She pulls from under her pillow her prayer beads. She smiles at me a peculiar smile that asks, did I notice this action? Her fingers gently move the prayer beads; her talk, in contrast, is about her ideas for her upcoming exhibition in Australia. The hospital looms even larger in this work.

Rummana Hussain's family home was in Lucknow. Among her treasured books was *Lucknow: The Last Phase of an Oriental Culture* by Abdul Halim Sharar. In many of our conversations, Lucknow is consistently featured as a source of inspiration for Hussain. Recognizing our shared interest in these histories, she insisted that we search for a copy of the book in one of Bombay's bookstores in order for me to have it for my own research, and library in Canada. In the chapter on medicine, Sharar describes the role of Lucknow doctors and medical practitioners in preserving the Muslim knowledge of the science of medicine: "Just as language and poetry were regarded as local arts, so the science of medicine was adopted as a local science." Today Lucknow is one of the few places in the world where the original

Muslim medical system, referred to as Yuani Medicine, can be found. Sharar concludes that at the time of writing, Yuani medicine "has no equal in the world."

London, Canada, July 6, 1999

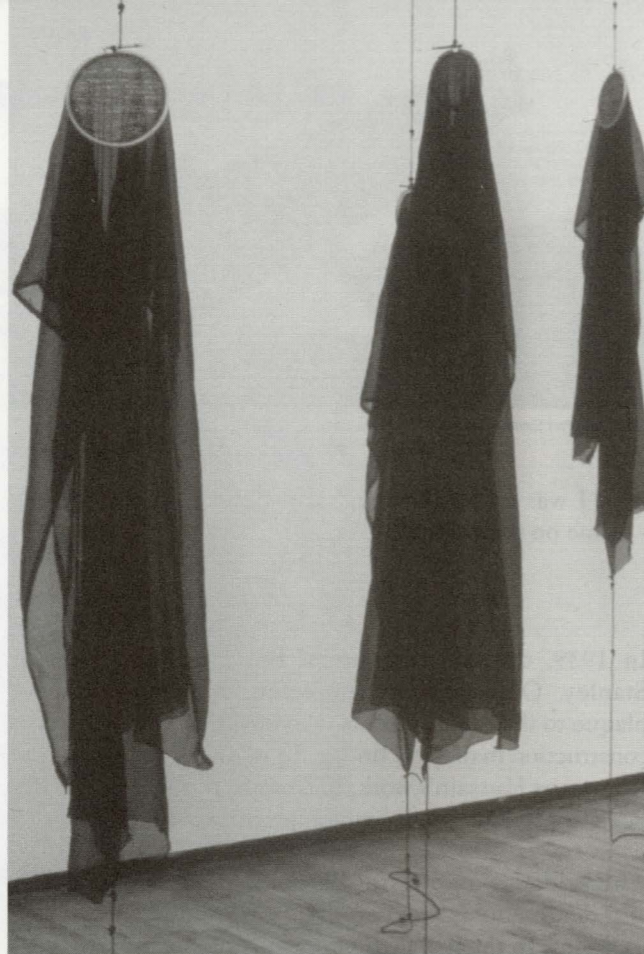
As I was sitting at my computer in my studio in London, Ontario, news of Rummana's death arrived by e-mail. In my grief I realized it was the first time that I had ever received the news of the death of someone so close to me by electronic mail. My connection to her and India was central to my experience of contemporary culture in India. Surrounding this artist and her work was the intensity of the experience a traveler feels arriving at a much anticipated destination.

Her installations, while revisiting apparently familiar sites, were profoundly altered by her intense focus. The quiet sound of bells is one such powerful memory from her video of her Queensborough Bridge walk. This subtle performative aspect to her installation *In Order to Join* recollects some of her earlier performance works. The bells from her ankle bracelets tinkling, as she does her labourious walk across the bridge, alternates with the whirring sound of traffic, wheels on metal. But it is the sound of the little bells that stayed in my memory. Through simple performative actions, one felt the determination of the artist to complete the walk across the bridge despite her very weakened condition.

In Order to Join both recorded this trauma and reflected on her mobility. The first "artist in residence" from India at Art in General, Rummana also became "the artist in hospital." The origin of the hospital in the Islamic world is found in the traveler's hospice. The reality of her difficult journey between two locales increased the power of the work. Positioned in a space no larger than her studio in Bombay or the small shop called Enter India in Port Stanley, Rummana's installation expanded the field of our vision and experience: "My project is less about two cities and more about the links that can be made between cultures, the rupture in memory, and the point at which we make connections with the present."

An artist and an activist in Bombay, Rummana Hussain was closely associated with SAHMAT (Safdar Hashmi Memorial Trust) and worked on all of SAHMAT's visual arts projects. She was extremely skilled at organizing events at very short notice and played a pivotal role in her cultural community in Bombay and other cities in India where she had a long working history. The skills that she used so effectively as an activist were also a part of her various installations.

Hussain had a keen interest in city life and architecture. Her knowledge of markets and locations to find whatever she might need for her work was a part of the exciting



In Order to Join (detail), Rummana Hussain, 1998, installation at Art in General, New York from September 1 - October 31, 1998. Photo courtesy of Art in General.

Rummana Hussain shown with her installation *HOME/NATION* at Gallery Chemould, Bombay, India, April 8-26, 1996. Photo: Chandita Mukherji. Courtesy of Gallery Chemould.



pleasure she took in creating her work. A walk with Rummana was never a simple walk along Bombay's Gateway to India or Naramin Point. Walking was a favourite pleasure and searching for materials was never far from her mind. The close affinity she felt for conceptual art, performance works and the collecting of ephemera are also closely connected to her political activism.

Combined with her love of books and films, Rummana's work was well positioned to enter into a radical departure from painting, where she had a reputation as a highly successful and acclaimed artist in India. She was very conscious of what she was rejecting when she put her canvas and paints into her storage cupboard. Her discontent with painting led her to find a method of working that strongly reflected her own predicament and the realities of living in an India that she viewed as often brutal.

The installation practice she chose was a deliberate and difficult choice but one she believed was more effective and one that registered the anger she felt as she witnessed the rise of right-wing elements and the push toward religious fundamentalism, subjects of earlier installations such as *Home/Nation*. She faced the sectarian violence and wide-scale riots in India in 1993, and at the time of the destruction of the Babri Masjid Mosque, her own medical condition came to light. Typically, she brought renewed vigour into her art. Her projects became increasingly a subversion of the object-making activity and a form of personal rebellion. She began to create through an inventory of found or personal objects, incorporating repeated elements or actions as a strategy that became understandable and richer in meaning through their repetition.

Doubt, scepticism and the pain of cancer were largely present in the last years as she lived and worked in the impossible space of a fatal illness. Like many who have become disaffected and recognize the problems associated with Western medicine, Rummana Hussain, while opting for treatment that was available to her in New York, was also drawn to consider alternatives. "The inability of Western medicine to find cures for many modern illnesses, like cancer or AIDS and the many side-effects of its pharmaceutical products have led to a degree of disillusionment."

During one of my last visits to the compact studio of Rummana Hussain, medical supplies spilled over into works-in-progress, found implements and photographs, journals; papers and publications were heaped in piles upon her desk. With understandable intensity and urgency, Rummana increased her pace. Like the metronome, a title of one of her earlier texts (composed as a series of questions voiced in a disturbing and threatening way), she maintained an ominous pace. The tiny sound of bells from her ankle bracelets became subtle reminders of

the fragility of her life and the traumatic events that were running parallel to her own debilitating physical condition. Like other artists, such as British artist Jo Spence whom Rummana admired and who died of breast cancer in 1993, she did not separate her personal crises from her awareness of political and economic realities.

Literary and historical narratives were a powerful means of echoing Rummana's condition within the narratives of emancipation. Hussain brilliantly titles her installation with a fragment of text from Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. This fragment is embedded within Morrison's slave narrative. In part, the novel is dominated by the struggle between Seth, the mother, and Beloved, a ghost-child of demanding and haunting presence. This alignment between literary narrative and visual arts, through a fragment of text, strangely invokes the presence of the ghost-child. While Morrison's novel painfully describes the slave experience of Seth, her violent "mother-act" is central. And as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak reminds us: "*Beloved* figures this disclosure, in effacement, as a maternal sacrifice, not to be passed on."

In choosing this fragment of text from *Beloved*, Rummana Hussain was conscious of the larger political and economic injustices in which she positioned her personal crisis. By figuratively positioning herself within this consciousness and while representing her own immediate reality, she was able to pursue this collective and politically charged narrative, acknowledging herself within this mix. Experienced in this rupture of memory, *In Order to Join* is a self-portrait of fragments of Rummana Hussain's double crisis of representation.

This essay will be included in a forthcoming monograph on the work of Rummana Hussain to be published by Gallery Chemould in Bombay, India.

Jamelie Hassan is an artist and activist living in London, Ontario, Canada. She was recently awarded the 2001 Governor General's Award in Visual Arts.

Notes:

Toni Morrison, *Beloved*. (Boston: Plume Books, 1988).

Terry Dennett and Jo Spence, "The Crisis Project: Scenes of the Crime," from *Real Stories, Revisions in Documentary and Narrative Photography* (catalogue from exhibition curated and edited by Jan-Erik Lundstrum) published by Museet for Fotokunst: Odense, Denmark, 1993, pp. 49-51.

Abdul Halim Sharar, *Lucknow: The Last Phase of an Oriental Culture*, originally printed as a series of articles under the title, "Hindustan Men mashriqi Tamaddun ka Akhri Namuna" in the *Lucknow Journal, Dil Gudaz*, (1913-1920). Translated and edited by E.S. Harcourt and Fakhir Hussain (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994).

Rummana Hussain, *In Order to Join*, artist statement from Art in General's Artist in Residence program. New York, 1998.

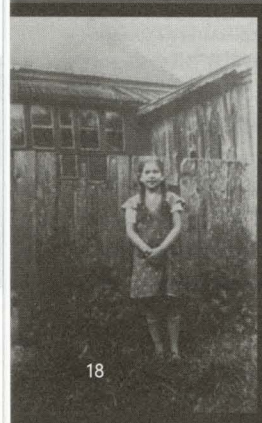
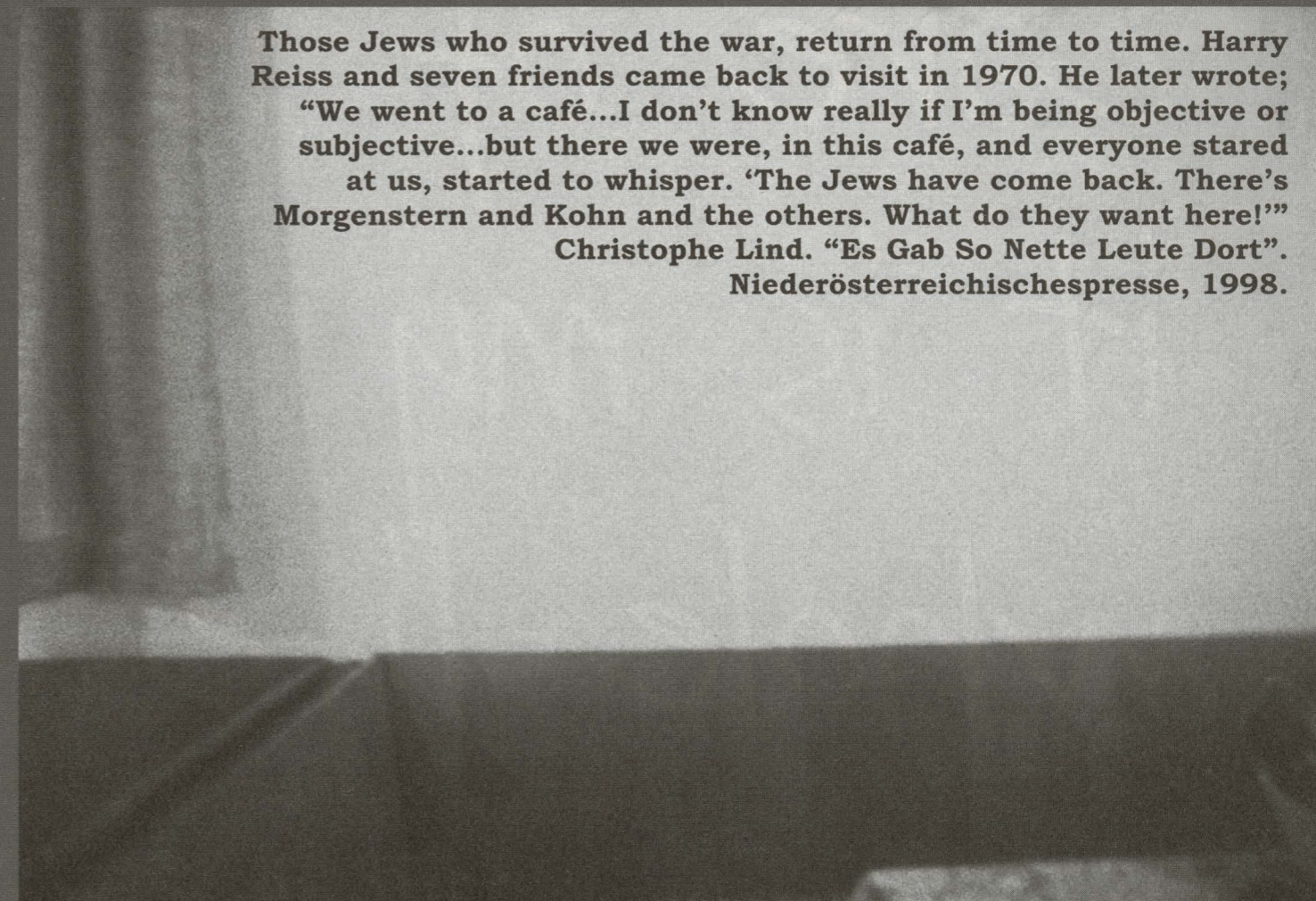
Jan Van Alphen and Anthony Aris, General Editors, *Oriental Medicine, An Illustrated Guide to the Asian Arts of Healing* (Boston, Shambhala, 1997).

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1999).

Of course, everything is different now. These buildings, once the centre of Jewish life, now house chic, expensive restaurants, galleries, boutiques.



Those Jews who survived the war, return from time to time. Harry Reiss and seven friends came back to visit in 1970. He later wrote; "We went to a café...I don't know really if I'm being objective or subjective...but there we were, in this café, and everyone stared at us, started to whisper. 'The Jews have come back. There's Morgenstern and Kohn and the others. What do they want here!'"
 Christophe Lind. "Es Gab So Nette Leute Dort".
 Niederösterreichischespresse, 1998.



She tells me that she knew many Jews before the war. "No," she answers... "Who is she?" I so much want to hear that she, somehow, survived. Her smiling face has touched me. Sometimes one has these instant attractions for an unknown person. It is difficult to explain why... "Julie Wachenheimer. She was really a lovely person! sewing." "Did she survive?" "No. She was amongst those

"Very nice people." "Are there any Jews left here?" Very poor, a widow, she raised her children by doing in the first deportation..."



“Take good
care of it,
it is my
whole life”:

Encounters with Charlotte Salomon's address to the living

by Sharon Rosenberg

“For the dead and the living,
we must bear witness.”

“Never again.”

“Never forget.”

“Those who do not learn the
lessons of the past are
destined to repeat them.”

Such axioms pervade memorial projects, from museums to teaching units, compelling the living to turn to the past: to remember, to learn, to secure the terms for a different future. Tightly held against the intrusion of their inverse — forgetting, amnesia — absence, such axioms are seldom held up to critical consideration, to what “learning the lessons of the past” might mean in the specifics of an engagement between a memory work and its interlocutors. And yet such consideration takes on an urgency in the face of an increasing interest in memorializing — to learn the lessons of — the atrocities of the twentieth century.

In mind of such musings and concerns I was most interested to hear of the traveling exhibition of Charlotte Salomon's epic *Leben? oder Theater? (Life? or Theatre?)*, at the Art Gallery of Ontario last summer.¹ Salomon, born in Berlin in 1917 to an affluent assimilated Jewish family, painted *Life? or Theatre?* (an extensive series of gouache paintings with text styled into a narrative), over approximately an eighteen-month period, during exile in the South of France.² In 1943, she was picked up by the Gestapo and taken to the transit camp of Drancy, where she was quickly deported to Auschwitz. It is believed she was killed on arrival, at the age of 26. When *Life? or Theatre?* was completed — and, it is assumed, knowing the risk of deportation — Salomon packaged it in brown paper labeled, “property of Otilie Moore” (an American woman with whom she stayed during part of her time in exile) and handed the package to a sympathetic local physician for safe keeping. The package of work was returned to Salomon's parents in 1947 (they had managed to survive the war by going underground) who, in 1972, donated it to the Jewish Historical Museum in Amsterdam, where it continues to be held.

A very small portion of *Life? or Theatre?* is kept on semi-permanent display at this museum, where it is placed in the Personal History section.³ Portions of the collection

have also been curated for shows in other sites, including galleries and museums in Germany, Israel, Japan, France, Denmark and England. However, the only previous traveling exhibition of the work in North America was in 1983–84, where it was shown in smaller gallery spaces, such as the Koffler Gallery in Toronto. The traveling exhibition that was returned to Amsterdam this past spring was curated by the Royal Academy of Arts in London, England, and is the largest collection of the work to be shown publicly — approximately 400 pieces of the 780 that Salomon had indicated belonged under the title *Life? or Theatre?*⁴.

As the largest collection of the work to be shown publicly and at such a prominent gallery, the Toronto exhibition provides a valuable opportunity to consider how *Life? or Theatre?* is being positioned for a public memory at the turn of the new millennium. What is it that a public is being encouraged to remember of Charlotte Salomon's art? What is it that we are being asked to learn of her, her time, her struggles, and their relation to “our” present? And, moreover, keeping in mind the considerations with which I opened this essay, what do visitors to *Life? or Theatre?* make note of remembering, of learning, of expecting to take with them when they exit the gallery? While such questions must usually depend on conjectures from the art itself and the discursive framing of an exhibition (i.e., promotional materials, exhibition text, media coverage), in this instance there is a much more textured understanding to be gleaned from the three visitor comment books (totaling over 400 pages) that were kept at the AGO.⁵ These books provide a rare opportunity to glimpse and deliberate on how a work of memory is actually engaged by those who encounter it in a specific time and place.

Framing an encounter with the past

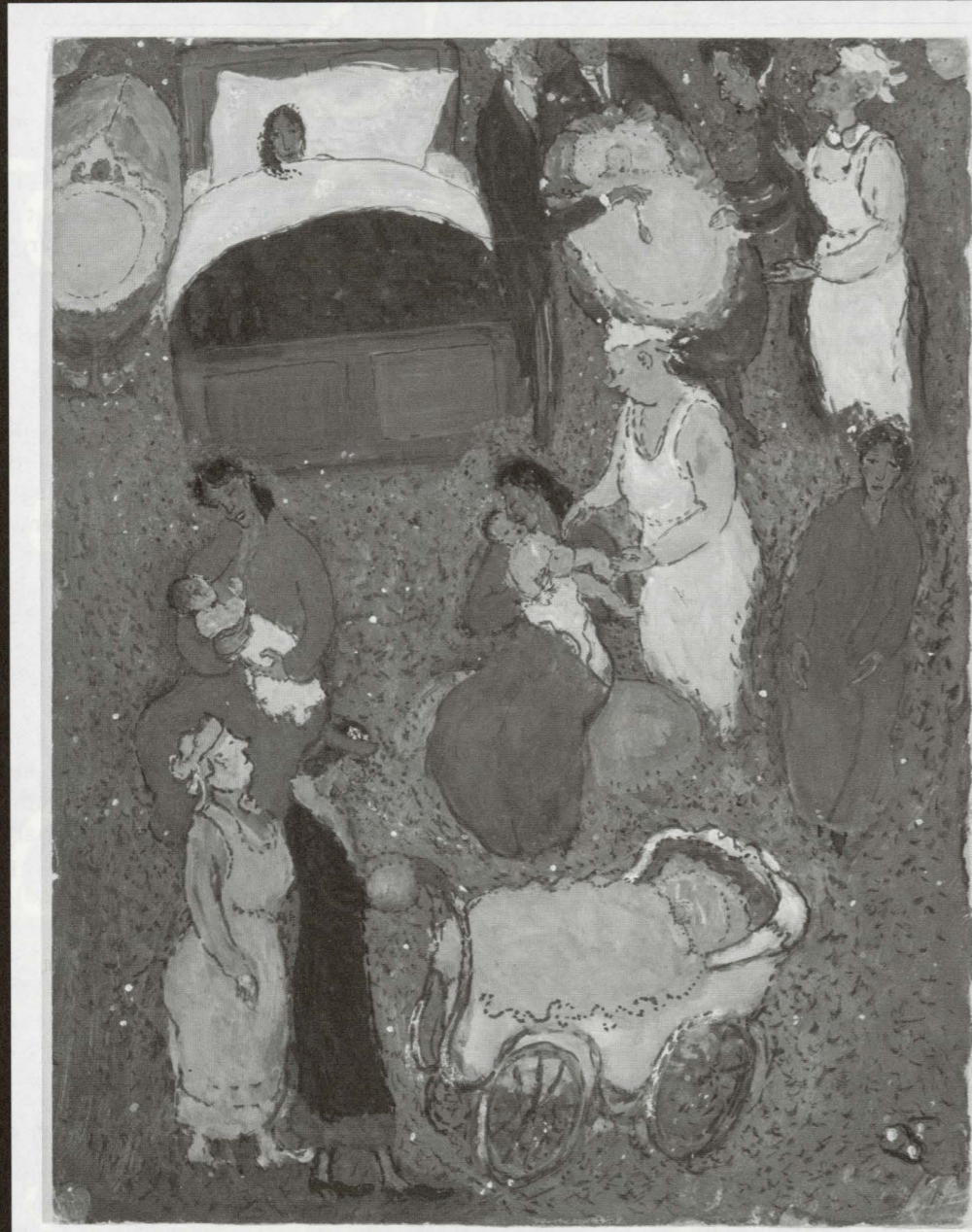
A visitor's journey through *Life? or Theatre?* is likely to have been initiated before they ever entered the gallery space. Promotional material from the AGO, including large subway posters and extensive coverage in local media, laid out a set of terms on which visitors were invited to view the collection of Salomon's epic work. A fold-out pamphlet from the AGO depicted eight images from *Life? or Theatre?* with the following text in large type: “As Nazi aggression escalated, the Berlin-born Jewish artist Charlotte Salomon sensed the end was near.

The audio-guide to *Life? or Theatre?* describes the work on the following terms:¹

3. Parent's Marriage: The first wall deals with events preceding Charlotte's birth: her aunt Charlotte's suicide in 1913, her parent's courtship and marriage, her own arrival on the scene. These beguiling, candid and often witty images immediately draw us into the narrative. Only the gouaches dealing with the suicide are sombre.

4. Franziska's suicide: After an early suicide attempt, Charlotte's mother Franziska eventually succeeds in throwing herself out of a window. Little Charlotte is told that her mother died of influenza, and although initially she is pleased that her mother is now safe in heaven, she becomes increasingly distressed at not receiving the letters her mother had promised her. The suicide rate in Berlin was one of the highest in the world at this time, with the rate among Jewish women highest of all. Jewish women probably were particularly susceptible to the pressures of assimilation, secularization and modernization.

5. Governess: Charlotte's concerned but emotionally distant father passes her over to a succession of unsatisfactory governesses. Only Miss Hase, who seems to be the first to encourage her to paint, finds favour in the child's eyes, and the vivid gouaches portraying Charlotte's life at this time reflect her happiness. Several gouaches are devoted to the theme of travel, which recurs throughout the work,



To Dr. A. Kann and Mrs. F. Kann, nee Knarre, a girl, yesterday, named Charlotte April 1917. Charlotte Salomon, 1940-42, from her autobiographical work *Life? or Theatre?* including over 1300 gouache paintings and texts. Courtesy of Collection Jewish Historical Museum, Amsterdam. Copyright Charlotte Salomon Foundation.

She wrapped over 800 of her paintings in brown paper and handed them to a friend with the words, "Take good care of it, it's my whole life." Charlotte died in Auschwitz at 26." The emphasis here — what is to be remembered, how learning is to be oriented — is on the tragic circumstances under which Salomon painted rather than on the content of the work *per se*, which is much more extensively a fictionalized staging of her memory of relationships, loss, love, suicide and the crises of death for the living (see sidebar descriptors). A more extended commentary in the *AGO Member's Journal* references this complexity: "Although set against the horrific events of Nazi persecution and the Holocaust, the works in this exhibition focus on the drama of relationships and what it means to be human."

Upon entering the exhibition on the second floor (Signy Eaton Gallery) visitors were invited to use an audio-guide, included in the \$12 admission price, to guide them on their journey. In the introduction, Matthew Teitelbaum, director of the AGO, tells listeners that they are about to see an "autobiographical fiction" that "bears witness to [Salomon's] life and times — a historical moment whose effects must never be forgotten for, as the saying goes, those who forget history may be doomed to repeat it." He continues, "The exhibition portrays two tales: the story of the person and the story of the work itself. Made in exile, hidden from the public for decades, this is an artwork of stunning beauty and emotional range. It is an intensely personal work which stands as a testament to art's power to heal deep trauma." The audio-guide moves on to an introduction by Norman Rosenthal, co-curator (with Monica Bohm-Duchen) of *Life? or Theatre?* and Exhibitions Secretary at the Royal Academy of Arts in London, England. Rosenthal describes the black and white photographs hung at the entrance to the exhibit, which depict the central figures of Salomon's life, who become the characters in *Life? or Theatre?* The photographs depict Charlotte Salomon as a young girl, her father Dr. Albert Salomon, her maternal grandparents the Grünwalds, her stepmother Paula Salomon-Lindberg, and Salomon's "love interest" and voice teacher Alfred Wolfshon. These figures become, respectively, Charlotte Kann, Professor Kann, the Knarres, Paulinka Bimbam, and Amadeus Daberlohn.

The audio-guide then includes a dramatization of Salomon's prefatory script to *Life? or Theatre?*, an address to those who would encounter it after her death, which includes the following statement: "Since I myself [Charlotte Salomon] needed a year to discover the significance of this strange work, many of the texts and tunes, particularly in the first paintings elude my memory and must — like the creation as a whole, so it seems to me — remain shrouded in darkness." Following some further

contextualizing comments, the audio-guide provides visitors with a synopsis of each story segment, many of which are followed by a dramatized reading of Salomon's accompanying texts by the actress Tilda Swinton. What is further unique about this guide is that it includes excerpts of the musical selections that Salomon refers to in her work, which she subtitled a *Singspiel* or "a play with music."

What visitors to the gallery encountered was a sequenced exhibition, following Salomon's organizational structure of a prelude, main section and epilogue, filling three large rooms. (Between the second and third, an additional room screened films about Salomon's life.) The gouache paintings were organized and framed into panels.⁶ Underneath each panel, the Royal Academy of Arts curators reproduced the accompanying texts onto a readable "lecturn-like" display. When attendance at the exhibition was low, it was straightforward, albeit time-consuming (this is an extensive and demanding show), to follow the text and image sequences. However, when visitors were standing three and four deep in front of the paintings, I found it easier to rely on the dramatized audio-guide and consider the gouaches from a little distance (one of the difficulties of this is that the detail on some of the storyboard-style gouaches is lost). While perhaps banal, it is worth noting that such conditions mark a visitor's engagement with *Life? or Theatre?*, and are a reminder that there is no pure and unmediated engagement with Salomon's painting and texts in a contemporary gallery viewing.

The promotional material, audio-guide, media commentary and the staging of the exhibition are remembrance practices fully implicated in the production of the terms on which the work comes to be meaningful.⁷ As practices that frame (and thereby delimit) how Salomon, her work and her life are to be remembered and known to a public, some 60 years later and many thousands of miles away, they can be considered inherently *pedagogical* practices. What I mean by this is, they can be understood as attempts to prompt and engage visitors in the development of a historical consciousness that might affect their perceptions of, feelings about, identifications with and the meanings they attribute to: Salomon, the effects of Nazi persecutions, Jewish femininity, art, trauma, suicide and loss. Thus, the exhibition, itself a communicative practice intended (however obliquely) to bequeath a memorial legacy to those it addresses, can be read as a doubled event of memory.

First, the art itself is a practice of memory, what Felstiner refers to as Salomon's "fleeing into memory." The catalyst for *Leben? oder Theater?* was Salomon's grandmother's suicide and, as a result of this, learning from her grandfather of

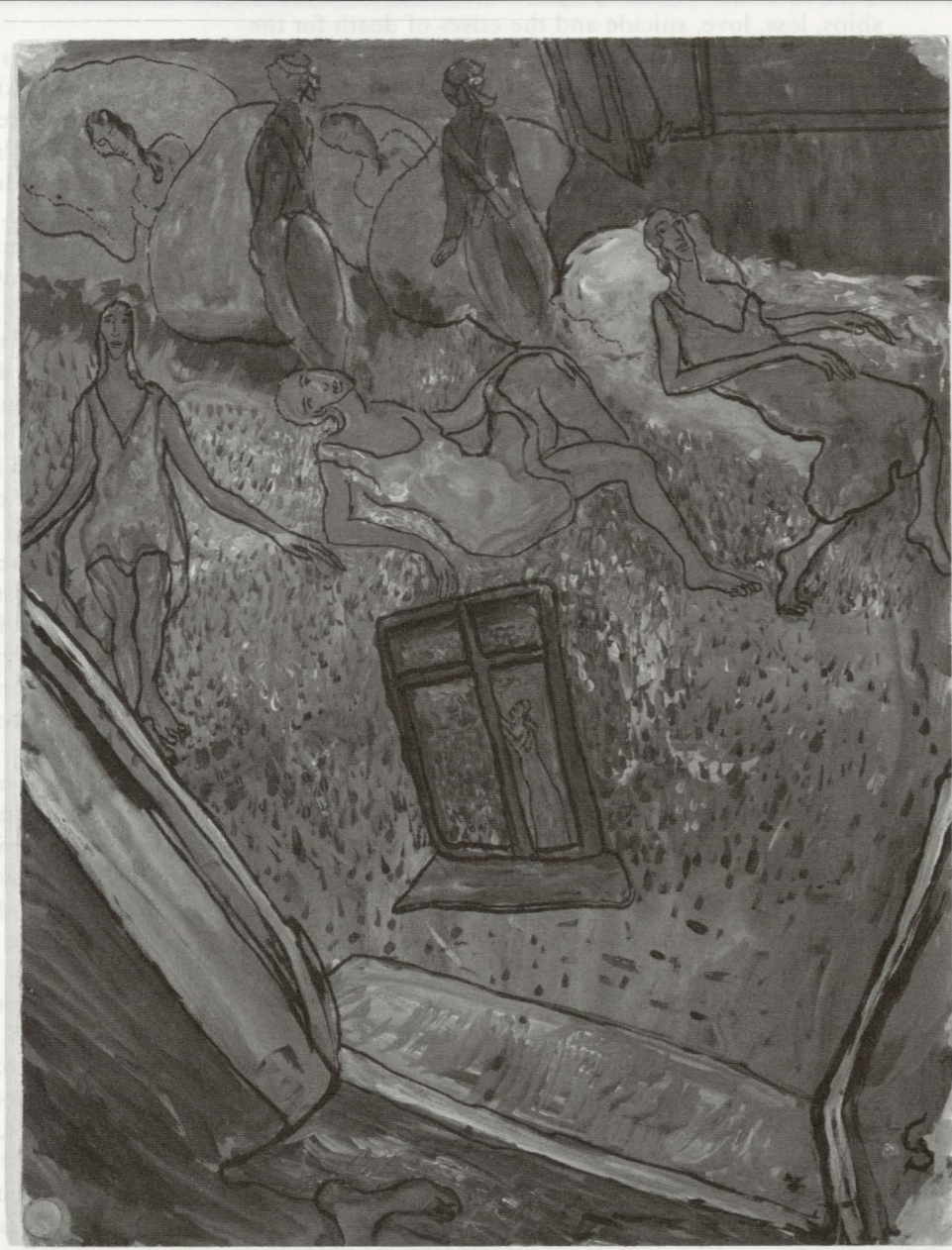
later finding echoes in Daberlohn's theories about the journey into the self in the quest for self-knowledge and salvation.

6. Paulinka Bimbam: Charlotte is at an impressionable age when Paulinka Bimbam enters and transforms her life. She worships her stepmother, but is also jealous of her and vies with everyone — her father, Paulinka's former suitor Dr. Singsong and Paulinka's adoring fans — for her attention and affection, saying "everybody loves her, but none as much as I do." Indignant at her new husband's account of his parents-in-law's attitudes toward him, Paulinka sends old Mrs. Knarre an accusing letter.

7. Grandmother's story: Having received Paulinka's letter, old Mrs. Knarre reminisces. She recalls the tragic suicides of her brother, her two daughters, her sister and niece. Despite feeling alone, she decides not to interfere with her new daughter-in-law's relationship with Charlotte.

8. Nazi accession: January 1933, the Nazis come to power and the lives of the Kann family members are changed forever. Professor Kann loses his right to practice as a surgeon in the university hospital and Paulinka is forbidden to perform in public. The Nazis, intent on ousting all Jews from German cultural life, allow Dr. Singsong to set up the *Kulturbund deutscher Juden* to keep Jewish culture alive, but totally isolated.

9. Art School: Charlotte decides to leave school and to study drawing.



Franziska: "I cannot bear it any longer, I'm always so alone," Charlotte Salomon, 1940-42, from *Life? or Theatre?* Courtesy of Collection Jewish Historical Museum, Amsterdam. Copyright Charlotte Salomon Foundation.

a multitude of suicides in her grandmother's family, including that of Charlotte's mother (whom Charlotte had been told died of influenza). Out of the devastation of this news, Salomon began to re-member her life in paint, as, in her words, a "sacrifice in order to create [the] world anew out of the depths." In passing this work on, in providing the prefatory framing and explanation, and in endeavoring to ensure its survival beyond her own, there is an implicit recognition by Salomon that her remembrances were not singularly for herself, but were an address to others. Felstiner argues similarly, noting that, with the Nazi encroachment in France, Salomon "revised her story's structure to *require* spectators." This notion of address carries over to the exhibition (which, again, is not limited to the art work), which might be read as an attempt to bind those who visit in particular relation — not only to the lives and deaths that Salomon represents, but also to each other, as witnesses to traumas and to the significance of her art.

The issue here is not that there can or should be a remembrance practice without pedagogical implications. Rather, the question becomes one of attention: what can be learned from attending to public remembrance practices? What might they help to support in the memory of Salomon's *Life? or Theatre?* What might also be lost here, glossed over, or hindered in an encounter with the prevailing frame? In raising such questions, I do not mean to infer that visitors will only make memorial meaning on the terms laid out through public remembrance practices. Instead, and to recall Iwona Irwin-Zarecka, the concern is one of framing; she observes: "how people attend to the past, if at all, and how they make sense of it is very much grounded in their experience. At the same time, and allowing for this, the public framing of remembrance does matter. Beyond providing resources to work with, public discourse may validate (or discourage) particular ways of seeing the past."

Visitor witnesses: what was learned?

As I study the comment books from the AGO, I am struck by two details: first, the majority of visitors who comment in the books include their signature; second, there is a consistent practice of identifying their place of residence. The list is extensive. It includes the expected surrounding area of the AGO, but also places much further afield: not only New York City, Rochester, Ohio, Denver, Massachusetts, Palm Beach, Los Angeles, St. Louis, but also New Zealand, Hungary, Jerusalem, Germany, England, Portugal, France, Australia, Iceland, Italy, Poland, India and Holland. I read the inclusion of such namings as particular practices by which visitors locate themselves as individuals, as a register of having heard and seen Salomon's address, her witness of a legacy of familial suicide and Nazi devastation. A cursory look through the books

reveals a repeated use of phrasing that gestures to the exhibition's impact: "unforgettable," "excellent," "touching," "extremely moving," "inspiring," "a privilege to view," "shock[ing]," "difficult to find the words"; the AGO should be "thanked for its courage," we should be "grateful that the materials survived [when she did not]," we must "tolerate and appreciate differences."⁸ While much of this phrasing seems similar to that in other comment books in which visitors offer their respect and gratitude to the artist(s), the extent of detailed commentary is more atypical, suggesting a diversity of complex and contradictory themes of response. These include: expressions of identification with Charlotte Salomon; expressions of dislike and disinterest in the exhibit because it "tells the same old story"; comments that connect the Nazi genocide to contemporary circumstances, in contrast to those that reinforce a distance between then and now; notes that the exhibit has inspired a viewer to paint, to tell her/his story; expressions of a deep and surprising impact on a visitor. From a selection of these comments, I want to highlight three key themes that stand out in the context of questions of remembrance and learning from what Cathy Caruth calls "catastrophic knowledge."

One of the most striking themes demonstrated by the visitor comments on *Life? or Theatre?* references the work's emotional intensity and impact. This comment is nicely illustrative:

Charlotte Salomon's life story collection is hard to grasp. It's many times more advanced than it seems at first glance. The style is "simplistic" but the emotion runs miles deep. It's a lot to absorb all at once. Excellent work.

Another visitor takes that sense of "a lot to absorb" further:

I am so completely moved by this story with the Holocaust hovering over each painting. Charlotte drew me into her world — I cannot speak, I cannot write.

The difficulty of communicating about or bearing witness to this work is most evocatively represented by this visitor's note:

comment preceded by the scratching of a thick pencil line: "It's as if putting a heavy line above, for it's just unbearable; the weight, the heaviness, I can hardly breathe. There is too much to absorb."

I am interested particularly in the repeated reference to how difficult the work is to "absorb" and to then speak of to others ("I cannot speak, I cannot write"), to such an

Paulinka tries to push her in the direction of fashion design so she can earn her own living. Her grandparents take her to visit Rome. Convinced she has a calling to become an artist, Charlotte eventually succeeds in entering the Academy of Arts.²

10. Paulinka's decline: Paulinka develops an exaggerated idea of her own abilities. She is blissfully unaware of the fact that the more adoration she receives from the public, the less genuine her singing is becoming.³

12. Amadeus Daberlohn: The arrival of the central figure of Amadeus Daberlohn, "prophet of song," marks the beginning of the main section of *Life? or Theatre?* Daberlohn makes a dramatic entrance to the Toreador's Song from *Carmen*. Salomon the artist maintains her ironic detachment even when depicting emotionally charged events. Wolfshon was her life's inspiration and probably her first love, but she was nevertheless very aware of his self-centredness, and his tendency toward pomposity. The music is almost over-dramatic, and comically debunks Daberlohn's inflated sense of himself. These gouaches introduce Daberlohn's theories and portray how he quickly becomes obsessed with Paulinka, calling her his Madonna. He takes little notice of Charlotte at first (25).

13. Orpheus: Daberlohn further develops his theories and discusses with his sculptor friend Paulinka's forthcoming performance of *Orpheus*. The story of Orpheus and Eurydice clearly



To the tune: "Jesus our Lord, we bow our hands to thee", Charlotte Salomon, 1940-42, from *Life? or Theatre?*. Courtesy of Collection Jewish Historical Museum, Amsterdam. Copyright Charlotte Salomon Foundation.

extent that the show (Salomon's story?) must be kept separate and distinct from the visitor by a "heavy line" in order to allow for breath, to make the remembrance bearable. To absorb carries connotations of soaking up, assimilation, digestion, immersion; in this sense, the comments suggest that *Life? or Theatre?* is experienced, by some, as unassimilable into current frames of understanding, is in excess of the level of emotion that can be (is expected to be?) readily borne at an art exhibit. While the comments do not make note of particular scenes, sequences or events, I note the visitor's remark that "the Holocaust hover[s] over each painting," a hovering that is, I anticipate, more broadly felt — especially given the discursive framing of *Life? or Theatre?* through promotional materials and media coverage.

This felt hovering seems to be most marked for visitors who express some form of identification with Salomon and/or with the traumatic legacy of the Nazi genocide. References to identification are a second major theme in the comment books and arise from a range of identity positionings. They include, for example, this comment by a German Jew who survived the Holocaust and for whom Salomon's depictions were devastatingly familiar:

I was born in Germany in 1920, a Jew. The parallels of Charlotte's experience to my own are devastating. Memories I have tried to forget were brought back to life for me. This experience will remain in my mind. The occurrences must be remembered — forever.

Born of a later generation, this young woman identifies with Charlotte on the terms of a Jewish femininity:

I thought the exhibit was very inspiring and creative. I am very glad I got a chance to see this, I feel like I really know Charlotte Salomon and, as a 23 year-old Jewish girl, I identified with a lot of her thoughts and concerns.

For another visitor, the legacy of a perpetrator identity carries its own complications:

Amazing works ... how could we allow such atrocities to happen? As a descendent of Germans, how is it possible to go through this exhibit and not feel ashamed at what my forefathers did ...

I am struck by both the richness of these comments and their risks. For, on the one hand, they gesture to the power of *Leben? oder Theater?* to address contemporary viewers, to bring Salomon's remembered world to life in "our" present, to recall deeply felt but not readily comprehended

experiences and histories. On the other hand, there is a risk in these expressions of identification that the viewer, while appearing at first to witness Salomon's story, fails to encounter those aspects of her work that surprise, unsettle, complicate or disrupt what is already known to the visitor, what they carry with them when they enter the gallery. While I would certainly argue that every relation to Salomon's work is inflected by individual and social histories (devastating memories of Nazi persecutions, the shame of the perpetrators, the experiences of being a young Jewish woman in contemporary Canada), I am particularly curious about and concerned by the apparent lack of specific and disruptive attention given to the multiple suicides that Salomon depicts. While these cannot be neatly separated from Nazi atrocities, neither are they entirely accounted for by this period, starting as they do as early as 1913. What would it mean for contemporary viewers to remember and learn *this* history?⁹

Articulated from a different direction altogether, but bringing forth a resonant set of questions for me, are those comments that make explicit a past-present relation in which contemporary, right-wing politics are paralleled to those of Nazi Germany. Such comments represent a third key theme and are illustrated by these entries:

Beware history repeats itself. What is going on in Ontario is the beginning of fascism. Remember June 15, 2000, OCAP [Ontario Coalition against Poverty] at Queen's Park and more of the Harris regime.

The world which Charlotte Salomon inherited feels like today's world in Canada, if we take into account the political climate brought about by Brian Mulroney. Mike Harris, Tom Long, Ralph Klein and Jean Chretien all subscribe to the same political and economic game plan. *Winners Take All*. These politicians are the dishonest fronts (for the worst parts of) corporate greed and unlimited power.

Let us never again repeat this tragic episode in history and remember that Hitler erased the deficit as well.

I am most interested in these types of comments, for I think they encapsulate the dilemma that is at the core of remembering and learning from traumatic histories. On one level, they are clearly compelled by a notion that those who do not know the past are bound to repeat it. Making such connections between the past and the present is a commonplace remembrance strategy, animated in the name of both right- and left-wing

illustrates Daberlohn's ideas about the conquest of the inner self. As he says about Paulinka, "this Orpheus, in order to regain his lost beloved, must descend, symbolically of course, into the underworld, into his own depths, for which he needs the help of Amor or Eros." In his determination to find and explore the enhanced state of consciousness which occurs during creative activity, and which he believes lies between life and death, he has a death mask made of his own features.

14. Daberlohn and Charlotte: This section marks the beginning of Charlotte's and Daberlohn's relationship. Daberlohn gives Charlotte confidence in her painting, saying that she is destined to achieve "something above average," and he asks her to illustrate a book for him. His carelessness toward her feelings however makes it painfully clear that she has no particular significance for him, except as living proof of his theories.

15. Daberlohn and Charlotte: Despite their increasingly intimate relationship, and the time Charlotte has spent painting Daberlohn's birthday present, he thoughtlessly brushes her off. She is reduced to following him around in order to find out what he thinks about her work.

16. Time Marches On: The artist's attention now switches abruptly from the personal to the frightening anti-Semitic outrages perpetrated throughout Germany on 9 November 1938, known as Kristallnacht (Night of the Broken

Glass). Professor Kann is arrested, and Daberlohn spends much of his time in the Kann-Bimbam home. The Knarre grandparents on the Cote d'Azur hear about the atrocities in Germany and her grandmother plans to invite Charlotte to stay with them.

17. The German Jews: Charlotte's father Professor Kann has been interned in a concentration camp, but Paulinka uses her charms to secure his release. The Kanns hold a dinner party for their friends before they all start leaving Germany, and after saying good-bye to Daberlohn, Charlotte travels to the south of France to join her grandparents.

18. The epilogue: The epilogue opens in a positive and brightly coloured South of France mode, but this is soon dispelled when war is declared. Old Mrs. Knarre tries to hang herself, and calling on Daberlohn's theories, Charlotte tries in vain to persuade her to live. These images are stark and raw. The figure of Charlotte seems to lose individuality, at certain times resembling Daberlohn and at other times merging with her grandmother, conveying a sense of a crumbling world. Her grandfather callously tells Charlotte about her family's history of suicide, and Charlotte begins to think that she too is going mad.

19. War is Declared: Charlotte and her grandfather are deported to a concentration camp in the Pyrenees, but are released on account of the old man's age and frailty. Charlotte Salomon's *Life? or Theatre?* draws to a close with

several pages of urgent, densely packed text describing the genesis of the work as though there were no time for more imagery.

20: Final Image: And from that came *Life? or Theatre?*

Notes

- 1 Reproduced here are the introductory comments to each section, some of which are then dramatized. A few lengthier introductory sections have been condensed for reasons of space. Again, I am grateful to the AGO for providing me with a copy of the audio-script for my research.
- 2 The audio-guide continues: "Charlotte Salomon herself was admitted to the prestigious Berlin Academy of Arts in late 1935, despite being Jewish, because her father had served the fatherland in the First World War. However, she was not permitted to claim an award, and was later forced to study at night, and her enrollment was annulled in 1938. Charlotte received a conservative training at the Academy, but as the library had somehow been left untouched by the Nazis, had access to books on modern art movements branded as 'degenerate' by the Nazis. The influence of artists such as Michelangelo and Giotto, Münch and Van Gogh, are easily apparent in Salomon's work, but perhaps more striking is her obvious familiarity with the Fauves and the German expressionists" (22).
- 3 Section 11 makes note of a separate showcase that includes 5 gouaches selected from the Prelude with their original tracing paper covers on which Salomon had written the accompanying text. This was the style that Salomon used for the first 217 paintings; from the Main Section on, she wrote directly on the gouaches (24).

politics and agendas. From the perspective of a progressive and anti-oppression politic, comments that link the Nazi regime to Harris' Ontario might, indeed, be read as learning and carrying forward the lessons of the past, to alert others to the risks of normalizing hatred. While such attention might be imperative to present-day political struggles, I am also alerted to what risks being obscured by this strategy. For at stake are not only issues of a politics but also an ethics of remembrance and learning. On this basis, it is insufficient to trace the significance of Salomon's *Leben? oder Theater?* on the terms of contemporary political needs alone. This engagement with the work falls short of encountering it — an encounter in which a visitor is compelled not only to see continuities between Salomon's time and "our own," but also to take in and consider the discontinuities, interruptions and other difficulties her fictionalized autobiography stages.

It is on this basis that I return to listen again to Salomon's parting words, "Take good care of it, it is my whole life." I suggest that the care summoned here is not limited to the doctor in whose hands Salomon placed the work, but also extends to contemporary viewers of *Life? or Theatre?*. Raised now is the question of what it might mean to take good care of Salomon's life as we encounter it through her art, long after her slaughter. Clearly a fraught question without a ready or singular answer, we might find some of its initial terms in this comment:

After witnessing all of this ... how can one describe one's personal and historical madness that is shared so much with the world? Have we really learned anything since these works were completed?

If your answer, as mine, is a dismayed "no" or "very little," then perhaps it is time to rethink prevailing notions of the relations between politics and ethics, remembrance and learning, past and present. To encounter the traumatized dead requires an opening of "our present" and holds within it the possibility of a profound social caring, not only for the dead, but also for the living.

Sharon Rosenberg is an Assistant Professor in the School of Women's Studies at York University. She writes predominantly on questions of trauma, memory and cultural production, and is working on a collection of essays on memorializing the Montreal Massacre.

References

- Antenna Audio. *Press Script: Life? or Theatre? The Work of Charlotte Salomon*. Unpublished document, n.d.
- Art Gallery of Ontario. *Visitor Comment Books for Life? or Theatre?* Unpublished documents, 2000.
- Charlotte Salomon: *Life? or Theatre?* exhibition catalogue (Amsterdam: Waanders Publishers, 1998).

Caruth, Cathy, ed. *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Maryland: John Hopkins University Press, 1995).

Felstiner, Mary. "Charlotte Salomon's Inward-turning Testimony," in Geoffrey Hartmann, ed. *Holocaust Remembrance: The Shapes of Memory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994).

Felstiner, Mary Lowenthal. *To Paint Her Life: Charlotte Salomon in the Nazi Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

Felstiner, Mary Lowenthal. "Taking Her Life/History: The Autobiography of Charlotte Salomon," in Bella Brodzki and Celeste Schenck, eds. *LifeLines: Theorizing Women's Autobiography* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988).

Greenberg, Reesa. "The Aesthetics of Trauma: Three Installations of Charlotte Salomon's *Life? or Theatre?*" presented at "Charlotte Salomon: Gender, Trauma, Creativity," the Royal Academy of Arts, London, 1998.

Irwin-Zarecka, Iwona. *Frames of Remembrance: The Dynamics of Collective Memory* (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 1994).

Parke-Taylor, Michael. "Charlotte Salomon's *Life? or Theatre?* AGO Member's Journal. Vol. 8 (3), pp. 2-4.

Royal Academy of Arts. *Life? or Theatre? The Work of Charlotte Salomon: Introduction to the Exhibition*. Exhibition catalogue, written by Monica Bohm-Duchen for the Education Department of the Royal Academy of Arts (Norfolk: Breckland Print, 1998).

Schmetterling, Astrid. "Tracing the Life (or Theatre?) of Charlotte Salomon," *Issues in Architecture and Design*, vol. 5 (1), pp. 115-128.

Simon, Roger I., Sharon Rosenberg and Claudia Eppert, eds. *Between Hope and Despair: Pedagogy and the Remembrance of Historical Trauma* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Press, 2000).

van Alphen, Ernst. "Autobiography as Resistance to History," *Caught by History. Holocaust Effects in Contemporary Art, Literature and Theory* (California: Stanford University Press: 1997).

van Alphen, Ernst. "Salomon's Work," *Journal of Narrative and Life History*, Vol. 3 (2&3), pp. 239-253.

Notes

- 1 I am most grateful to the AGO for their support of my research on the Salomon exhibition. In particular, I thank Sheila Dietrich for expressing such interest in my initial questions about *Life? or Theatre?* and for putting me in touch with Iain Hoadley, who was so generous in sharing contacts and materials. My gratitude also goes to Monica Bohm-Duchen, co-curator of *Life? or Theatre?* who kindly answered my innumerable questions about Salomon's work. I am appreciative also of York University and SSHRC for the small research grant that I was awarded to study the 2000-2001 Salomon exhibitions.
- 2 While not well known, Salomon's work has generated a fairly substantial scholarly interest. See, for example, Felstiner 1988, 1994, 1997; Greenberg 1998; Schmetterling 1997; van Alphen 1993, 1997; and the forthcoming collection on her work edited by Michael Steinberg and Monica Bohm-Duchen.
- 3 While most of the original Salomon work is kept in storage at the Jewish Historical Museum, they have also located the entire collection on the museum's web site (www.jhm.nl).
- 4 The traveling exhibition of *Life? or Theatre?*, as curated by the Royal Academy of Arts (where it was on show from October 1998-January 1999) was shown at the AGO (April 14-July 9, 2000), the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston (August 9-October 29, 2000) and The Jewish Museum in New York City (December 10, 2000-March 25, 2001).
- 5 My gratitude to the AGO for permitting me to have access to these comment books.
- 6 See Greenberg (1998) for a critique of the framing devices used by the Royal Academy curators, in which the images are displayed largely without visual reference to the tracing paper overlays that Salomon used in the prelude section. What this raises is the complexity of how to exhibit *Life? or Theatre?* in ways that are accessible to a large number of viewers and protect the original work. This was a much-discussed concern among the Royal Academy curators (Bohm-Duchen, personal communication).
- 7 I offer that this is particularly the case in circumstances, such as this, in which the artist is long dead and there is very little record of what she intended to communicate by the work.
- 8 While few in number, there are some critical comments in the books; these include, for example, critiques that the exhibition text was not translated into French, and a criticism that the exhibition does not speak more extensively to Jewishness and the anti-Semitic events of the Nazi period.
- 9 I should note at this point that I have focussed my discussion here on a close reading of one of the three comment books. In that book, only one direct mention is made of Salomon's relationship to Daberlohn and there are no specific remarks on the suicides or their impact.

Study Skins

THE FINAL SLEEP...LE DERNIER SOMMEIL
AN INSTALLATION BY SPRING HURLBUT
Royal Ontario Museum, April 28-August 12, 2001

Review by Scott Sorli

an ancient Chinese encyclopedia, according to Borges, divides animals into:

- a) those that belong to the emperor
- b) embalmed ones
- c) those that are trained
- d) suckling pigs
- e) mermaids
- f) fabulous ones
- g) stray dogs
- h) those that are included in this classification
- i) those that tremble as if they are mad
- j) innumerable ones
- k) those that are drawn with a very fine camel's hair brush
- l) others
- m) those that have just broken a flower vase
- n) those that resemble flies from a distance

Spring Hurlbut's *the final sleep...* is a complex and layered installation, and a *tour de force*. It belongs to a world of literal magic realism that coincides, lightly and firmly, with the domestic realm. The exhibition disperses the limit between imagination and reality, revealing a fantastic province deep in the bowels of the Royal Ontario Museum.

The following warning graces the entry to the Roloff Beny Gallery for Contemporary Culture:

This exhibit contains numerous natural-history specimens (animal remains), which may be disturbing to young children.

And just inside there is a quiet disclaimer, common now at the end-credits of popular films, that no animals were injured or killed in the production of this endeavour. No such pacifiers appear upstairs in, for example, the Bat Cave, or the Dinosaur Gallery, two popular children's exhibitions configured as more-or-less 1970s naturalism. Indeed, the conventions of the Royal Ontario Museum don't require (and, for that matter, can't permit) the disavowal of its own practices, nor would the museum-going public expect them to do so. Irrespective of this, Hurlbut's installation *the final sleep* is met with studied silence, whispered conversation, nervous laughter. The exhibit does disturb, not particularly because of the study skins, but rather because it ruffles our understanding of the real.

A more appropriate warning is the introductory piece to *the final sleep*: a Tang dynasty tomb guardian, an earthenware sculpture consisting of a man's face, with bird's wings, four hooved legs, and three parallel rows of bony dinosaur plates down his back. He's sitting at attention the way a guard dog would, defending the entry, ready to act against any trespass. It's an animal (borrowing from Borges) that guards, and embodies, *those that are included in [Hurlbut's] classification*. The



Arctic Hare (*Lepus arcticus* study skin, captive, QC, Canada 1934) and an Ajagaak skull and pin game (Arctic Hare skull, bone, sinew; Inuit, Baffin Island, Canada early 20c.), gift of Rev. A.L. Fleming. Photo courtesy of Royal Ontario Museum/Hurlbut Collection.



Diverse Fish Species in Antique Jars. Note: The jars in this display date from the 19th and early 20th centuries. This type of storage container is no longer used except to house some older collections. Photo courtesy of Royal Ontario Museum/Hurlbut Collection.

drip glaze is warm cream, shown off beautifully by the black velvet surface of the oak vitrine encasing the sculpture. From this entry landing, a purview of the warm, dark gray gallery space opens, and one can see the calm rhythm of oak vitrines containing their pale contents, carefully lit from above by clinical low white lights. From here we descend a few gentle steps.

Artist Spring Hurlbut has chosen and arranged artifacts and specimens in order to create a monochromatic "museum within a museum." The artist's installation, like the museum itself, constitutes a "final resting place" for specimens and artifacts which have achieved an immortality of sorts in their conservation and classification as part of a museum's collection. In *The Final Sleep*, however, there is no chronology, no hierarchy, no illusion of life.

— the Royal Ontario Museum

The first vitrine on the floor of the gallery holds a pair of large swans crowded together. The head of the bird on the left, a Trumpeter Swan, looks up through a glass black eye, while the bird on the right, now and forever a Mute Swan, has her eyes closed. They have been laid on their

backs, exposed black feet tied off and tagged with identification labels. The Trumpeter's label is preprinted at the top as COLL OF J.H. FLEMING and beneath in fountain pen (in Fleming's hand, I presume) is written *Cygnus buccinator, Lake St. Clair Ontario 1873*. Through this vitrine can be seen the dead contents of vitrines beyond, and in the multiple reflections between, one's own reflection, translucent and ghostly, looks back.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the Trumpeter Swan, the largest waterfowl species native to North America, had been thought to have been market hunted to extinction. For the sake of his collection, J.H. Fleming may have shot the last one to have sheltered in Lake St. Clair; I don't know. Certainly, none nest there now. There was a time, according to Peterson's *Field Guide to the Birds*, when "some ornithologists would not accept sight records unless they were made along the barrel of a shotgun. Today it is more difficult for the average person to secure collecting privileges."

While Vid Ingelevic's excellent touring exhibition *Camera Obscured: Photographic Documentation of the Public Museum* unveils the act of curation that has occurred behind the scenes of, say, the Bat Cave or the Dinosaur Gallery, Spring Hurlbut veils the act of collection with an

interlacing embroidery of meaning. The vitrine to the left, on axis with the gallery, backed by a stolid, dark gray column, could also be the first: "no chronology, no hierarchy, no illusion." A pair of demurely positioned women's shoes made of feathers, pearls and leather (on loan from the Bata Shoe Museum, UK 1962) rest among four Tree Swallow nests (*Tachycineta bicolor*, Ontario 1931). Soft downy white feathers cover the pair of shoes and line the insides of the nests. Currently empty, these concave containers were once meant to house expectant females. Now they rest alone together, homely and poignant constructions whose collection is based on elapsed, nearly ineffable aspirations.

There is at least one more pair of vitrines that could be met first. If, in a fit of misplaced nationalism, you were to drag your kids through the Sigmund Samuel Canadiana Gallery, a winding hallway with dull historical room settings behind glass, you would end in to an introductory vestibule of *the final sleep*. To the left is displayed a cotton net Wedding Veil (gift of Mrs. Margaret Grey, Scotland 1840-65) and to the right, a Mourning Hat (hemp, Korea, late 19th century). In quickly bypassing the "Canadiana," one could easily have entered *the final sleep* without initially noticing a shift in tone. Indeed, it would have taken some time to realize that the wedding veil and mourning hat share tears of loss; some time to awaken to the garments, as well as the hides, and especially to the conventions of classification, all, as study skins.

Appropriately enough, the lead quote regarding Borges and the Chinese Encyclopedia is from a source that, for the moment, and for the author, remains ephemeral.

This year, Scott Sorli has taught a fourth year option studio at the U of T's Faculty of Architecture, Landscape, and Design entitled "Constructing a Domestic Realm." As a member of the executive of the Toronto Society of Architects, he programmes the annual spring TSA film series. He is currently curating the upcoming YYZ group exhibition "TV dinner with landscape." Scott Sorli works fulltime at Ian MacDonald Architect Inc.

a better place

BGL, ADRIAN BLACKWELL, GILBERT BOYER, DESMEDIA COLLECTIVE, BRIAN JUNGEN, SYLVIE LALIBERTÉ, JOHN MARRIOTT, JAYCE SALLOUM, KIKA THORNE

MacKenzie Art Gallery, Regina, Saskatchewan, February 9 to May 27, 2001

Curated by Timothy Long

Review by Christine Shaw

In developing this exhibition, MacKenzie Art Gallery curator Timothy Long began by asking whether "in this age of megacities, corporate agendas and globalized free trade," it is "still possible to dream of a better place?"¹ Looking at contemporary art practices in Canada's major cities — Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal — a *better place* brings together works by Adrian Blackwell, Gilbert Boyer, Brian Jungen, Sylvie Laliberté, John Marriott, Jayce Salloum, Kika Thorne and the BGL and desmedia collectives. As a conceptual blueprint for discussing the work in the exhibition, Long imagined the concept of the city as a series of polarities such as stranger/community, public/private, urban/rural, inner city/suburb. Ultimately what he finds in the works is a shared belief that change is possible "if not on a global scale, at least within a neighbourhood," and that in "using the city as a reference point, these artists offer a reassessment of utopian idealism and propose pragmatic, small-scale models for community and social change."²

Employing irony, humour and symbolic inversion, all of the artists in this exhibition focus on and mimic ideas of everyday life in the city, and the small-scale models presented in the exhibition cover a broad territory. Strategies include the creation of artifacts representing real or imagined places, solicitations or invitations to participate in the social environment, and a construction of spaces that intersect intimate and public experience. Sylvie Laliberté's video *L'outil n'est pas toujours un marteau* (*The tool is not always a hammer*) offers an illustration of an imag-

ined utopia that reminds us of what is missing in our present society. Attaching a star wrapped in tinfoil to a bread knife, Laliberté constructs a magic wand that she uses to illustrate the power of imagination. For Laliberté, social change is not always produced by force; even a child has the ability to understand what is wrong with her world, and to imagine a better one. However, reality intervenes at the conclusion of Laliberté's video, and she acknowledges the limits of her own agency — one cannot imagine three suns into being.



Video still from *L'outil n'est pas toujours un marteau* (*The Tool Isn't Always a Hammer*), Sylvie Laliberté, 1999, colour, 9:40 min. Distributor: Vidéographe Distribution-Diffusion-Documentation, Montréal. Courtesy of MacKenzie Art Gallery, Regina.

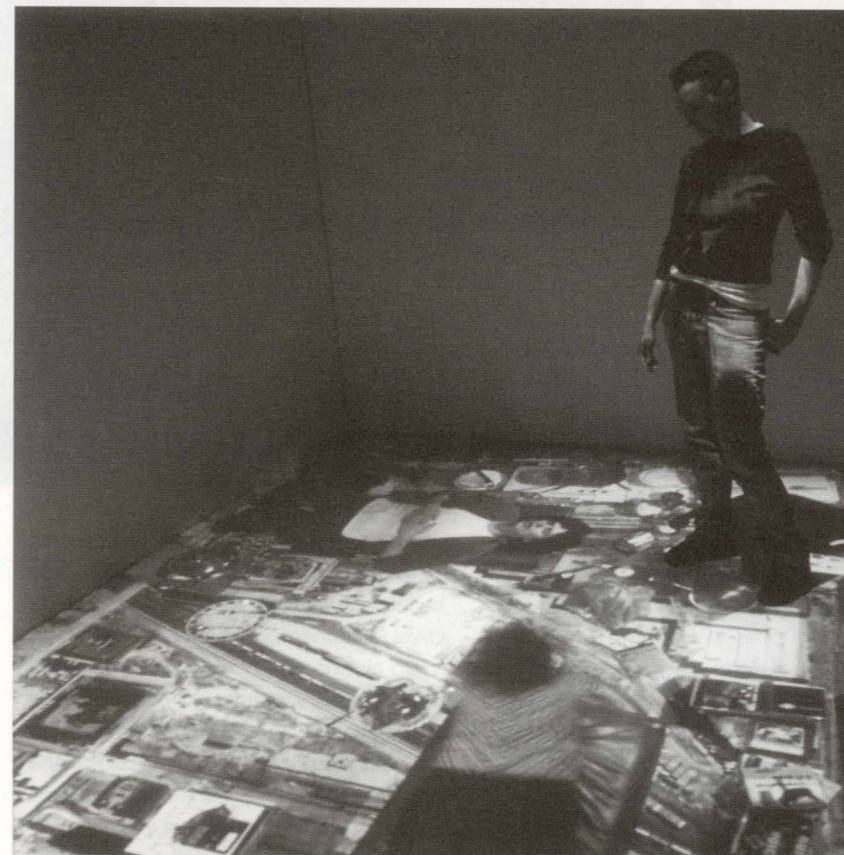
Advocating for an art that embodies the possibility of change, this exhibition suggests that both social conditions and personal situations can be altered. The most engaging work in a *better place* seems to propose that social and political change is an ongoing process; art might not institute a new social order but it may act as a catalyst for social interaction.

These works encourage spectators to examine the conditions of our own surroundings, prompting us to reflect and react. John Marriott's *Incidental Park Zones* emphasizes the tripartite process of becoming, being, belonging. In his "trade-show" style installation, banners, posters and postcards promote the three easy steps we can take toward building a better world. Employing an all-too-familiar language of government information campaigns, Marriott encourages us to

individuals and members of a shared space. His work is optimistic about humankind's potential and therefore makes a place for the convergence of "strangely familiars."³ It is precisely this sort of familiarity that entices a viewer to participate: "to be a part, be a park."

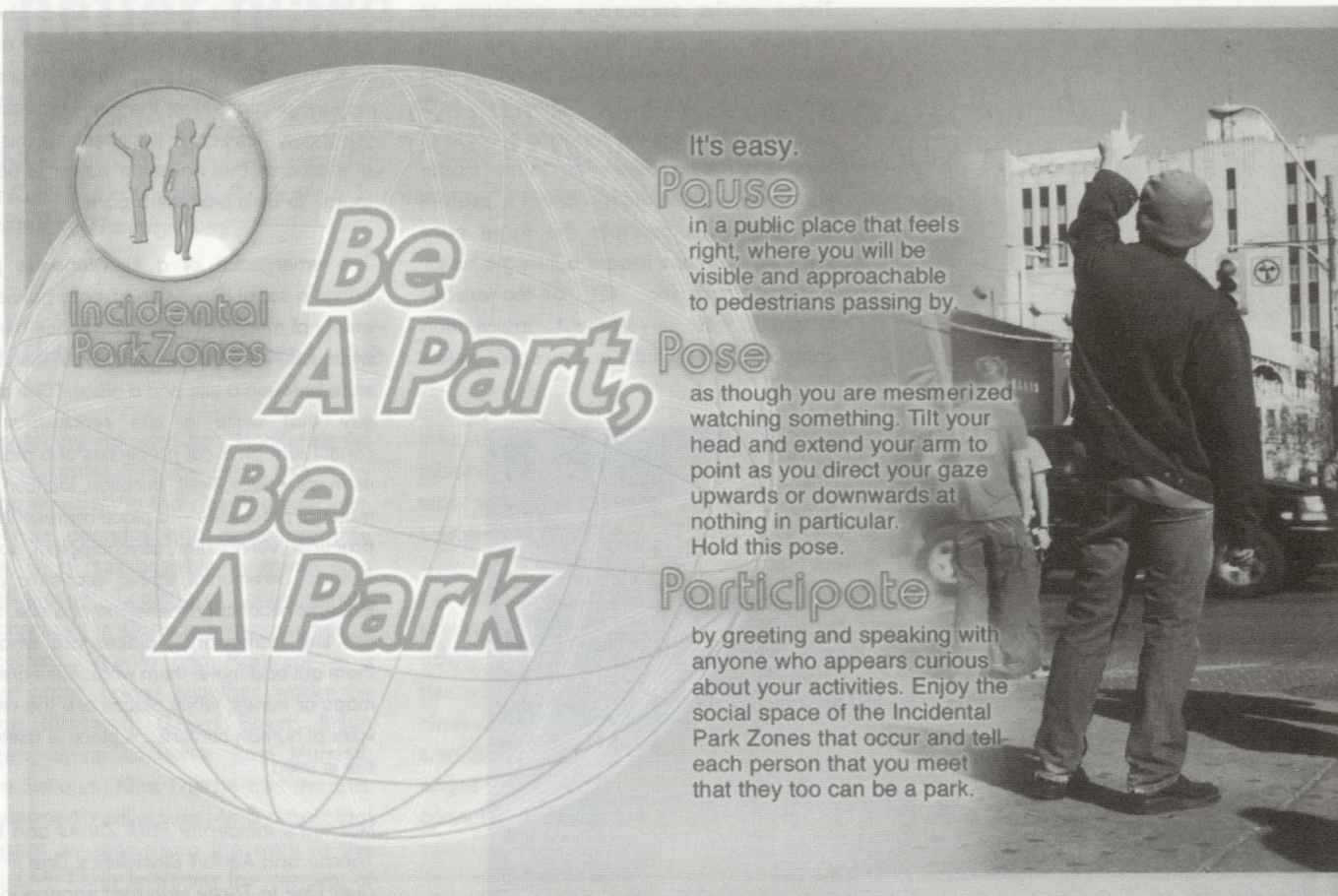
The emergence of a spontaneous park brings a social dimension to a site previously empty of meaning. This occurrence mirrors what Jeff Kelley has written about the difference between a site and a place: "One might say that while a site represents the constituent physical properties of a place — its mass, space, light, duration, location and material processes — a place represents the practical, vernacular, psychological, social, cultural, ceremonial, ethnic, economic, political and historical dimensions of a site. Sites are like frameworks, places are what fill them out and make them work. Sites are like maps or mines, while places are the reservoirs of human content... A place is useful, a site is used."

Marriott's *Incidental Park Zones* and Kika Thorne and Adrian Blackwell's *One to One Over One to Three Hundred* engage in the making of an art of place. Both of these works focus on the potential transformation of a used site into a useful place. Thorne's and Blackwell's collaboration is part of a sustained response to the urban development of Toronto's megacity (a used site). They expose the irresponsibility and cruelty of public policy that makes private life a struggle, and remind us how important this struggle is in terms of the formation of communities and the creation of useful places. *One to One* is a multiple-slide dissolve projection that simultaneously maps images of the city, its neighbourhoods and a home onto each other. The images are cast onto the floor of an enclosed room and we watch the intimate world of their home and its corresponding activities unfold under our feet. This installation becomes a place where the artist and viewer negotiate, produce and make sense of the social. *One to One* encourages our observation of the structure and meaning of daily life and re-authenticates our actions within it. Emphasizing social development over commercial development,



Installation view of *One to One Over One to Three Hundred*, Adrian Blackwell and Kika Thorne, 1998, dual slide projection on floor, 10:40 min., 305 cm x 457 cm. Photo: Don Hall. Courtesy of MacKenzie Art Gallery, Regina.

"Pause, Pose, Participate," and to create a community in public by drawing the attention of passers-by to a moment in the streets. His booth even offers us a video that demonstrates to us how simple it really is: just stop, point to a cloud and you too can spontaneously create a community of strangers brought together by their collective observation of the seemingly insignificant. Key to Marriott's practice is the solicitation of the chance encounters that mould and shape our experiences as both



Poster from *Incidental Park Zones*, John Marriott, 2001, inkjet photograph. Photo: Don Hall. Courtesy of MacKenzie Art Gallery, Regina.

Thorne and Blackwell aptly reiterate the notion that any site filled with social content can become a place.

Whether through representation or intervention, the works in this exhibition remind us that art is always in process, and that it "reflects human experience in socially and culturally constructed spaces which are never static and never cease to change; art thus seems intrinsically unfinished... and always negotiated through dialogue."⁵ As there are limits to the amount and types of change a system is willing to absorb, these changes need to be distributed and sustained through time. None of the strategies put to use in *a better place* necessarily lead to a new social structure, but they remind us that through art and the understanding of its effect, we can contribute to the processes of change already underway.

Christine Shaw is an artist and curator currently researching her PhD in Social and Political Thought at York University.

Notes:

- 1 Timothy Long. "beyond utopia: today's search for a better place," *a better place* (exhibition catalogue). MacKenzie Art Gallery. Regina, Saskatchewan, 2001, p.8.
- 2 Ibid, p. 8.
- 3 Marriott notes that "a stranger is just a friend you haven't met yet." Dominic Pettman, in his essay on love and community, continues: "a friend is just a stranger who happened to cross your path. This may also explain why strangers are very rarely strange, and should perhaps be called 'strangely familiars.'" (Dominic Pettman. "In the Fine Underwear of Our Minds. Love and Community in the Age of Globalism." *Parachute*, 101, Winter 2001.
- 4 Jeff Kelley. "Common Work," *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art*. Ed. Suzanne Lacy. Seattle: Bay Press, 1995, p.142.
- 5 Mireya Falch-Serra. "Geography, Diaspora, and the Art of Dialogism," *Parachute*, 90, Spring 1998.

brehtaking: Sue Lloyd's searchworks/chest cavity

Lloyd's searchworks were exhibited with Kelly McCray's Gnawts in breath taking, curated by Carla Garnet and Sharon Switzer Gallery TPW, Toronto, April 5 to May 12, 2001

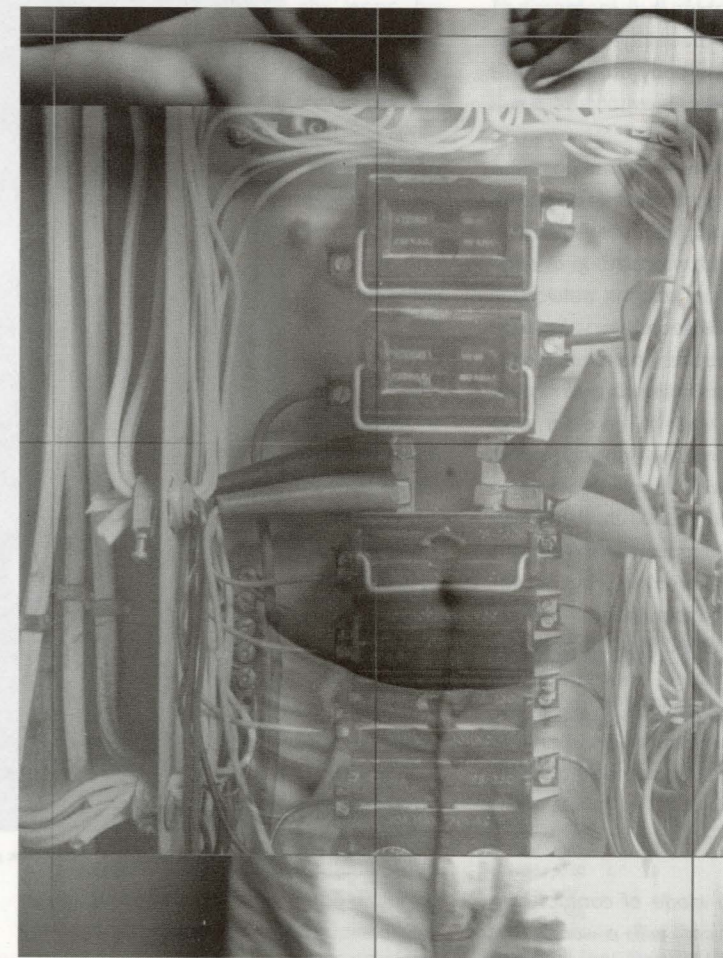
*chest cavity
The Red Head Gallery
Toronto, September 6 to 30, 2000*

Review by Janice Andreae

Presence and absence are coupled in and to the same framework. In place of plentitude, being, fullness or self-identity is not lack, absence, rupture, but rather becoming.¹

I struggle to read Sue Lloyd's *searchworks* and use Elizabeth Grosz' thoughts as my guide. This body of digitally produced, photo-based images continues Lloyd's investigation of corporeality and its correlation with spatial location. In *searchworks*, an installation of ten photo-based images, she engages in a deconstructive play with Western systems of representing the figure in space. By suspending whole or almost whole figures between anonymity and the very specific person or people that they are, she balances the "figure" on a precarious edge of being, she notes, "between symbolism and portraiture."² Accordingly, these bodies resist traditional readings and appear to occupy a parallel universe to my own viewing context. The work entices me to search, identify and decipher it: an impossible but challenging task.

The sensual and provocative surfaces of these ten chromogenic prints disturb and attract me. Clearly, the representational space-time context they occupy is not my



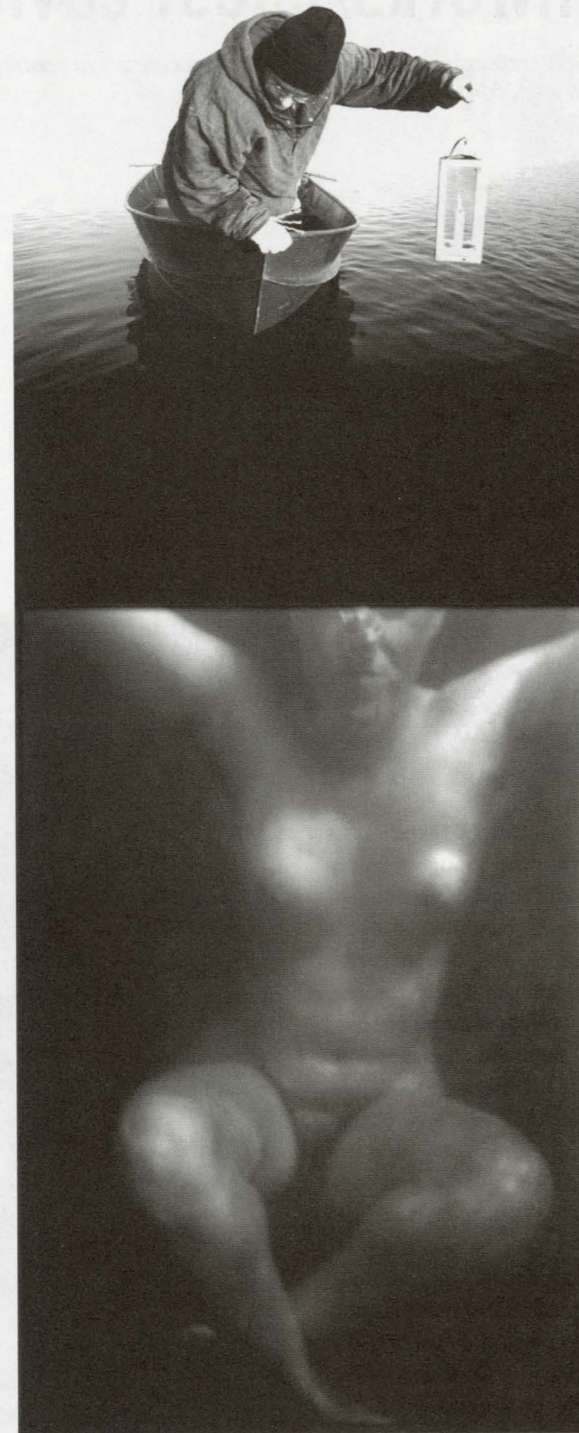
fu0-13, Sue Lloyd, 2000, black and white silver print on colour photographic paper from digital output, then laminated, 60.96 cm x 45.72 cm. Image courtesy of Sue Lloyd.

own, but it is familiar. Fragments of anonymous people are situated in generic landscape settings of cottage-country Ontario. A search is conducted at dusk on a northern lake; two people cross a vast frozen wasteland; someone lands on (or leaves) an unknown shoreline in rough water. A drama unfolds, but no access is provided to narrative context. Unoccupied, except for anonymous traces of human presence, these deep, lonely, breathtaking spaces are juxtaposed with another where a gasp for air might cause drowning.

Lloyd's watery regions are ambiguous, and resistant to scrutiny. No reference is made to location. Yet human presence is again detectable. A (female) figure swims toward me but her face is not visible. Corporeal surfaces swell in the foreground. Without diminishing, they are abruptly cropped by the narrow scope of the camera lens. These bodies only become human when they become readable, that is, inscribed with "socially coded meanings and significances ... making the body a meaningful, 'readable,' depth entity."³

Lloyd constructs a framework that pairs the two very different regions of these corporeal beings in relationship, as if as "lovers ... closed off to the world, wrapped up in each other, disinterested in what is outside..."⁴ The space of each searchwork is self-contained, self-absorbed and ambiguous, yet each surface resonates with such intensity that it spreads, each to the other, and infects me. I breathe deeply, engaging this unfamiliar contact with things, substances and regions that morph into the unknown and unreadable. I glimpse more than the waxing and waning of breathing, but "movement, processes, transmutations" constituted by a desire that exhibits "its capacity to shake up, rearrange, reorganize the body's forms and sensations, to make the subject and body as such dissolve into something else, something other than what they are habitually."⁵

[Erotic desire] is a mode of contact with things and substances, with a world, that engenders and induces transformations, intensifications, a becoming something



logrowboat, Sue Lloyd, 2000, chromogenic print from digital output, 121.92 cm x 47.63 cm. Image courtesy of Sue Lloyd.

*other... [Such desire] may end in production ... the production of sensations never felt, alignments never thought, energies never tapped, regions never known.*⁶

Lloyd's quest for new ways of configuring and thinking about the body is fueled by her desire to explore the "active interrelations possible between" what Grosz describes in *Space, time and perversion: essays on the politics of bodies* (1995) as "(lived) representations of the body and (theoretical) representations of space and time."⁷ Grosz argues that the worlds people inhabit and how they understand their location in them are affected by the ways they understand space and time,⁸ thus "the over-arching context of space-time, within which bodies function and are conceived, also needs serious revision."⁹ She observes that "representations of space and time are in some sense correlated with representations of the subject" and that an historical correlation exists "between the ways in which space (and to a lesser extent, time) is represented, and the ways in which subjectivity represents itself."¹⁰

Accordingly, Lloyd conducts her investigation of the mechanics involved in practices of representing the human subject in space by employing the paradox of a body site that can be both full and empty: the chest cavity. She uses the digital blue guidelines as a grid overlaying this anonymous, half-clothed, male subject. She carefully inspects his body's surface, quadrant by quadrant, as if examining a cadaver in a morgue.

*What needs to be shown is how the body is psychologically, socially, sexually, and representationally produced.*¹¹

A few years ago, Lloyd states, she wanted to photograph the human figure against a white wall:

Looking back, I think I was perhaps inspired by the look of high-end studio photography, its depthless and undefined backgrounds. My own intention ... was to isolate the body from its known contexts, extracting it as an entity

independent of the daily contexts upon which it is logically dependent in order to function. The bodies that I photographed hovered slightly, between representing the person they were and the abstracted symbol that they could be read as.¹²

Produced through technologies of imag(in)ing from her interplay with traditional black-and-white photographic practices and new digital processes, the eighteen black and white silver prints provoke questions about producing and reading images of the body. All are printed onto colour photographic paper from digital files and then laminated, giving them the feel of specimens instead of works of art. Similarly, Lloyd intervenes with stock responses to representations of the male nude associated historically with the Western art canon. Her male figure's chest is bare and he wears slouchy jeans; his stomach bulges slightly. He is neither heroic nor youthfully beautiful but is an ordinary man, perhaps a friend. His torso is cropped at his upward-turned chin. Lloyd has deliberately removed signifiers or particularities of experience that affect readings of being located and dislocated in time and space. Because the torso appears frontal and upright, these images do invite ritualistically inscribed readings of the body, which are disturbing. Lloyd positions her subject as if standing at attention for medical or military inspection, or facing a firing squad, a reading reinforced by the intersection of the guidelines at the centre of his chest, suggesting a target glimpsed through the cross-hairs of a rifle scope. This lone figure, anonymous and of unknown whereabouts, is a vulnerable sight.

Lloyd inserts objects into some of the imagescapes to see how they affect the reading of the male figure, digitally scanned from the Polaroid exposures she made initially. This process of scanning exposes traces of yellow and purple, previously invisible. Such chance effects, indicating uneven exposure of the Polaroid surfaces to oxygen, add to the discursive surface play of these figurescapes. To one, for example, she adds peonies, which

bleed across and into the surface. For me, these red stains carry connotations of religious sacrifice and funereal ritual.

These chest cavities harbour numerous linguistic associations necessary to understanding the body, yet it becomes increasingly difficult to read this corporeal figure as a subject. The multiple exposures of the young man show many, but subtly different, variations of his original frontal stance. Instead of adding more information, each constructed image provides even less knowledge about this figure as subject. As my reading process shifts and builds, a fluid transformation occurs between figure and ground. Over all of the surfaces of the *chest cavity* installation, a fluid play of possible readings occurs.

*Knowledge is an activity; it is a practice and not a contemplative reflection. It does things.*¹³

The corporeal surfaces Lloyd produces seduce her viewers into contemplating their sensuality and eroticism, but reading these evocative works is not an easy process. Her search for ways of reconceiving the body involves an intellectually complex investigation, yet she employs a framework for her practice that remains open to chance effects, unusual juxtapositions and playful, sexy responses. She conducts her search simply and economically, but the surfaces are fluid, active, and overflowing: breathtaking.

Janice Andreae is a Toronto visual artist and writer, and member of the FUSE Editorial Board, whose interests are contemporary textual and visual art practices.

Notes

- 1 Elizabeth Grosz. *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), p.165.
- 2 Sue Lloyd. Artist Statement: *searchworks*, April 5, 2001.
- 3 Elizabeth Grosz. *Space, time and perversion: essays on the politics of bodies*. (New York: Routledge, 1995), p.104.
- 4 *Ibid.*, p.204.
- 5 *Ibid.*, p.204-5.
- 6 *Ibid.*, p.204-5.
- 7 *Ibid.*, p.100-1.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p.97.
- 9 *Ibid.*, p.100.
- 10 *Ibid.*, p.97.
- 11 *Ibid.*, p.104.
- 12 Artist Statement: *searchworks*, April 5, 2001.
- 13 Elizabeth Grosz. *Space, time and perversion: essays on the politics of bodies*. (New York: Routledge, 1995), p.37.

Other Conundrums: Race, Culture, and Canadian Art

by *Monika Kin Gagnon*
Arsenal Pulp Press, 2000.

Review by Meera Sethi

There are perhaps only a few other contemporary cultural critics as significant to artists of colour and First Nations' artists in Canada as Monika Kin Gagnon. *Other Conundrums: Race, Culture, and Canadian Art*, a collaborative publication between Arsenal Pulp Press, Artspeak Gallery and Kamloops Art Gallery, is a collection of selected writings on art, culture and politics by Gagnon, a writer, curator and teacher of communications studies at Concordia University. Having written extensively on the art and culture of minoritized and alternative arts communities in Canada for over ten years now, Gagnon has not only been witness to, but also participated in the rise of "cultural race politics" in this country. *Other Conundrums* traces the sharp contours in this recent history and provides complex critical analysis of the work of artists such as Dana Claxton, Sharyn Yuen, Nhan Duc Nguyen, Henry Tsang, Shani Mootoo, Jamelie Hassan and Paul Wong.

Other Conundrums looks into the vibrant conversations and events that have constituted the maturation of Canadian cultural race politics since the early 1980s. By describing and analyzing landmark events such as the In Visible Colours Film and Video Festival and Symposium in Vancouver (1989), the About Face, About Frame national conference of independent film and videomakers, the Minquon Panchayat caucus at the 1992 ANNPAC/RACA conference, and the Writing Thru Race conference of First Nations writers and writers of colour, Gagnon traces these explosive disruptions by minoritized artists within the Canadian cultural landscape,

linking them to an emergent antiracist politics in independent arts communities in Canada.

The most apparent thread of continuity between the essays in this collection, each written for different occasions, is Gagnon's interest in language, or as it were, the absent language of race and racism among Canadian art critics. In the essay titled "How to Search for Signs of Asian Life in the Video Universe," Gagnon effectively brings together two central problematics explored in her writing: the riddle of identity categories and the politics of power that guide the writing of social/art histories. She argues that exclusions of race and racism in history translate into a lack of socially accessible discourses of race and racism, which in turn results in the perpetual and invisible recentralization of discourses of whiteness. However, while the writing of racialized histories can contest racially unmarked pasts, they also present another problem, that of a limiting lens. The specific conundrum explored by Gagnon in this chapter is explained by her in relation to defining the perimeters of her historical investigation of East Asian Canadian film and video artists:

In my desire to politicize a context... I might not examine the specificity of this context where a politicization of identity did not occur, also where a cultural analysis of race, and of racism, were not socially accessible discourses. On the other hand, to focus selection based solely on a producer's East Asian self-identification and

I don't feel very anonymous right now. My own boundaries between the political and the personal seem dissolved.

cultural reflection as context, would impose a structure of value that validated certain practices as authentically East Asian despite the highly relative and artificial state of such cultural categorizing.

According to Gagnon the tentative resolution of this dilemma is to employ identity categories determined by the specifics of the moment being studied.

Gagnon clearly has a strong interest in language and the changing terms of representation. This preoccupation is evidenced in the use of lexicons as a strategic narrative device throughout the book. By elaborating, for example, on the

notion of hybridity as it is evoked in vastly different contexts (ranging from botany to high tech, genetics, pop culture, colonial theories and mythology), Gagnon presents the reader with an almost literal representation of the challenge of terminology, a challenge she persistently engages.

The essays in *Other Conundrums*, particularly "How to Banish Fear: Letters from Calgary," hold stirring personal appeal. Gagnon presents her readers with a deeply felt account of the effects of racism in Canadian arts communities. Despite the years (since 1971) of official multiculturalism and the post-'80s rhetoric of "diversity" and "equity," Gagnon, through a series of letters written to her friend and colleague Jamelie

Hassan, unmistakably documents the failure of mainstream arts institutions' attempts to practice a genuine antiracist politics. Clearly, as these letters indicate, watching this failure is transformative for Gagnon. In a letter to Jamelie Hassan dated 2 October 1993, Gagnon states:

I don't feel very anonymous right now. My own boundaries between the political and the personal seem dissolved. I am trying to speak this dissolution, trying to map a shift and relation between these two spaces.

In another letter to Hassan dated 12 October 1993, Gagnon writes:

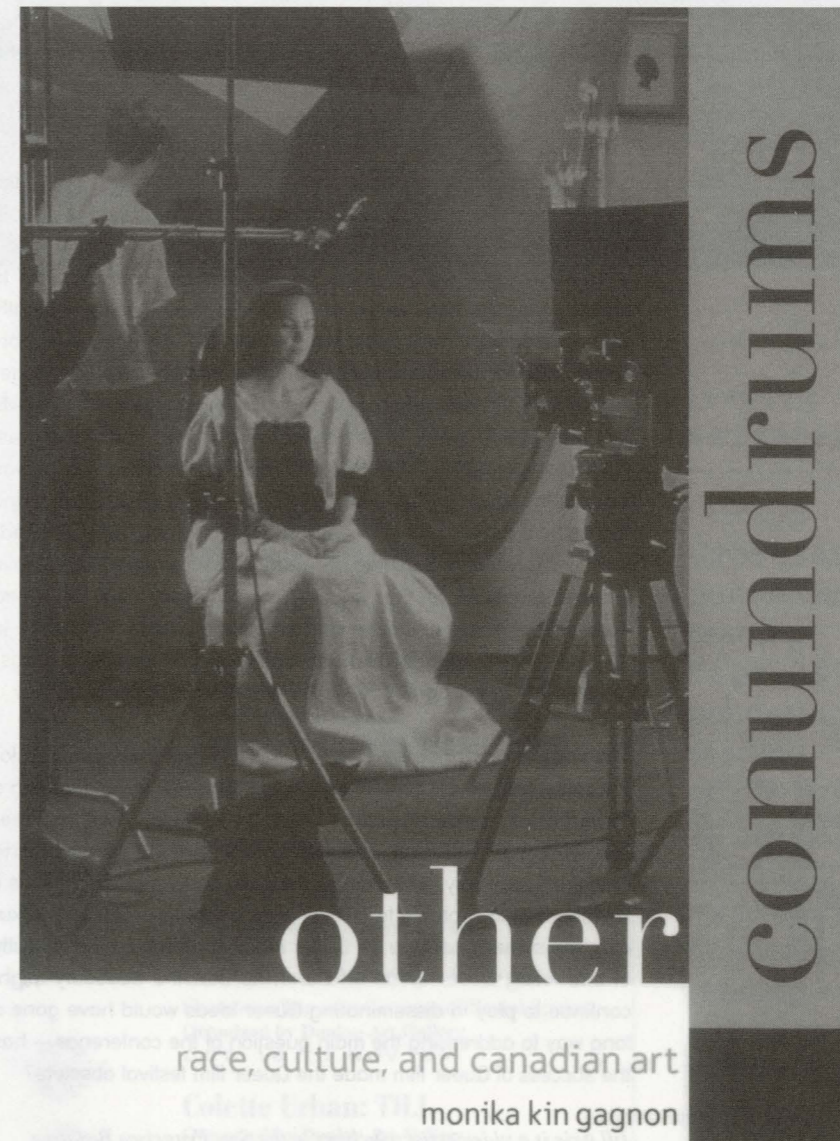
Yes, it tears through the gut, which is largely because of its systemic dimension, the ways in which racism's reverberations, over and over again, contaminate all aspects of social life. This is why we need to create a dynamic between the personalization of events and its wider, systemic context.

And this transformation moves Gagnon to hope and action:

I optimistically believe in the possibility of transforming some of the contents within which we live. I understand the integrity of disillusionment, the ambivalence that underpins all efforts to operate at this intersection. But what more is there than to write and rethink the world?

Other Conundrums is a valuable collection in the area of Canadian cultural studies. It is useful not just for its documentary, personal and critical reflections, but also for its insistence on developing a framework attuned to the work of artists of colour and First Nations' artists in Canada.

Meera Sethi is a writer, visual artist and cultural critic living in Toronto, and also a member of the Editorial Board of FUSE Magazine.



short
FUZE

Persistent

by Jill Arie

M
i
S
S
S

From June 17 to 20, 2001 the San Francisco International Lesbian and Gay Film Festival celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary with a conference entitled *Persistent Vision*, held at the Center for the Arts, Yerba Buena Gardens, San Francisco. The conference was organized and programmed by two Canadians: Ellen Flanders, former Executive Director of Toronto's Lesbian and Gay film Festival, and filmmaker Lynn Fernie. They did an excellent job of finding space in the program for a large contingent of Canadian filmmakers and academic critics. On each day of the conference a keynote address was delivered by an important Queer film personality: Barbara Hammer (opening address), B. Ruby Rich, Cheryl Dunye, and Del LaGrace Volcano.

Persistent Vision should have been a landmark conference, where serious debate about both the impact and continued viability of Queer filmmaking was assessed, fought over, celebrated, grieved, mourned and recuperated. Instead, the organizers stated that they wanted all the participants to consider "our successes, as reflected by the growth of Queer visibility in the past decade, [which] belong to all who have worked in the multiple currents of this project of liberation." However, some of those who contributed to the "success" of Queer film were set up as potential scapegoats. At least for the sessions that I attended, participants expressed anxiety that the academics present would be incapable of speaking to either artists or a generalist audience. This false assumption that academics cannot speak to artists belies the ways many artists and academics are mutually self-constituting. They need each other. But even more importantly, such tensions and myths ignore numerous artists' engagements with the academy, and deny the existence of visual arts faculties where many artists make artistic and academic lives. Particularly troubling about such a myth at *Persistent Vision* was the fact that much of the popularity and viability of Queer film and the festival circuit has to do with the use of such work in academic research and teaching. In many instances academics have been responsible for the success of particular films and filmmakers by turning a serious and sustained gaze on the work. In fact, one might ask where Queer film would be without the existence of the few progressive voices and spaces in the academy.

The organizers announced that no funding had been secured for the conference, a dilemma that points to the relationship between a "progressive" academic culture willing to take up the art of Queer film and the enduring anti-intellectual culture across North America. Ideas only get funding if they are easily marketed. While it is somewhat acceptable to market selected images of Queer sexuality, the same is not true for Queer ideas. Confronting the difficulty of marketing Queer ideas and the role that the academy might continue to play in disseminating Queer ideas would have gone a long way to addressing the main question of the conference — has the success of Queer film made the Queer film festival obsolete?

Jill Arie is a video artist who lives in the San Francisco Bay area.

base de données ART PUBLIC
PUBLIC ART database

Œuvres éphémères et permanentes
Ephemeral and permanent works

www.artexte.ca/artpublic
www.artexte.ca/publicart

Centre d'information Artéxte Information Centre
460, rue Sainte-Catherine Ouest
Espace 508
Montréal (Québec)
H3B 1A7
Tél. : (514) 874-0049
Télec. : (514) 874-0316
artpub@artexte.ca
www.artexte.ca

20 ans/years

Québec
CONSEIL DES ARTS
Vidéotron Réseau d'affaires
Conseil régional de développement de l'île de Montréal
Ville de Montréal
The Canada Council for the Arts
Le Conseil des Arts du Canada
index imago

D
DUNLOP
ART
GALLERY

REGINA PUBLIC LIBRARY 2311 12TH AVENUE
REGINA, SASKATCHEWAN
S4P 3Z5 TEL 306.1.777.6040 FAX 306.1.949.7264
WWW.DUNLOPARTGALLERY.ORG

**Dunlop Art Gallery
CENTRAL GALLERY**

Breathing Room:
Ruth Chambers and Karilee Fuglem
Organized by Dunlop Art Gallery
SEPT. 15 TO OCT. 28

Cape Breton Modern:
Terrence Syverson
Curator Ingrid Jenkner
Organized by Mount Saint Vincent University
Art Gallery
NOV. 10, 2001 TO JAN. 13, 2002

SHERWOOD VILLAGE GALLERY

Nikki Forrest
CONTINUES TO OCTOBER 11

Godzilla vs. Skateboarders:
Skateboarding as a Critique of Social Spaces
Organized by Dunlop Art Gallery
OCT. 18 TO NOV. 29

Colette Urban: TILL
Organized by Dunlop Art Gallery
DEC. 6, 2001 TO JAN. 24, 2002

SASKATCHEWAN ARTS BOARD
The Canada Council for the Arts
Le Conseil des Arts du Canada

reading writing discussing debating
expressing advertising subscribing
pondering submitting inspiring desiring
reading writing discussing debating
expressing advertising subscribing
pondering submitting inspiring desiring
reading writing discussing debating
expressing advertising subscribing
pondering submitting inspiring desiring
**GET
INFUSED**
reading writing discussing debating
expressing advertising subscribing
pondering submitting inspiring desiring
reading writing discussing debating
expressing advertising subscribing
pondering submitting inspiring desiring
reading writing discussing debating
expressing advertising subscribing
pondering submitting inspiring desiring



West Wing Art Space,
1267 Queen Street West
Toronto, Ontario
(416) 531-9073



Sixty4steps Contemporary Art
1164 Queen Street West
Toronto, Ontario
(416) 535-7837

November 8 - 30

Jasper Goedman (Netherlands)
Rita Inez Reichhuber (Austria)
Katie Taylor (UK)
Lin Lin (China)
Zhou When (China)

Opening
November 8, 7 - 10 pm

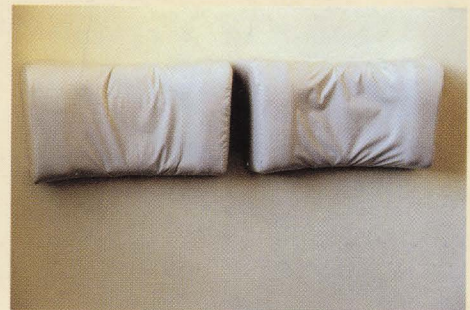


Jasper Goedman

November 8 - 30

Sayaka Honsho (Japan)
Melissa Laing (New Zealand)
Rob van Oostenbrugge (Netherlands)
Wouter Sluis (Netherlands)

Opening
November 8, 7 - 10 pm



Melissa Laing

**STARTING
NOW**

**Artists from the
Dutch Art Institute,
Enschede**

Curated by Richard Rhodes

Gallery talks begin
at 1 pm, November 10
at Gallery 1313

Art education:
fact or fiction?

A forum discussion
S.P.I.N. Gallery
156-158 Bathurst St.
Toronto, Ontario



November 14,
7:30 pm

With Hendriekje Bosma,
Vera Frenkel,
Noel Harding, Ken Lum,
Richard Rhodes



Royal Netherlands Embassy

Dutch Art Institute, ArteZ
interdisciplinary research visual arts and media



Juan Haag



Martin Sollmann

November 8 - 28

Dunstan Coire Low (UK)
Juan Haag (Colombia)
Patrick Ros (Netherlands)
Hester Slingenberg (Netherlands)
Beatriz Gravalos Manero (Spain)

Opening
November 8, 7 - 10 pm

November 9 - 30

Jasper Goedman (Netherlands)
Katerina Katsifarakis (Greece)
Karen Migoni Goslinga (Mexico)
Martin Sollmann (Germany)

Opening November 9, 7 pm

Event Nights: Friday
November 16, 23, 30, 7 pm



Gallery 1313
1313 Queen Street West
Toronto, Ontario
(416) 536-6778



Art System,
327 Spadina Avenue
Toronto, Ontario
(416) 542-1222