

FUSE

MAGAZINE



Notice

March 27, 2002

Changes in the delivery of government investment in Nova Scotia's arts and culture sector will result in the winding down of activities of the Nova Scotia Arts Council. A new Arts and Culture Council will be established. Consequently, this office is now closed. Every effort is being made to inform clients about these changes.

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COVER: Sign posted on the door of the Nova Scotia Arts Council after government representatives secured the front door. See Feature, p. 22.

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Rally outside legislative buildings in Halifax in support of the Nova Scotia Arts Council, April 18, 2002. Photo: C. O'Neill. Courtesy: Two Planks and a Passion. See feature *A Principle in Exile*, page 23.

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FUSE

MAGAZINE

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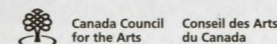
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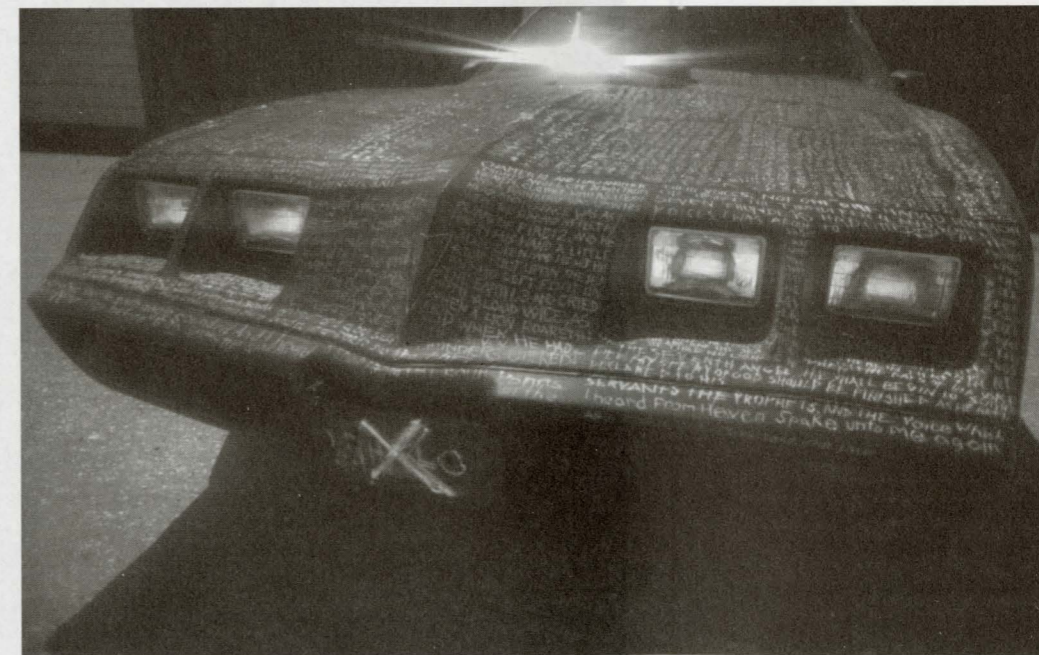
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Canada



Trans AM Apocalypse #3, John Scott, 1998, 1983 Pontiac Trans AM with entire Book of Revelations inscribed into surface. Courtesy: S.P.I.N. Gallery. See ShortFuse, p. 52.

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Arts funding has been a long-term obsession for FUSE. Typically, as in this case, our interest is precipitated by a crisis. Still, you needn't look back further than the late 1980s to find FUSE articles about artists protesting for a living wage. By the early 1990s, as global capital pushed hard to be the only game in town, "please give us enough to live on" was replaced by "please don't cut us" and then shortly thereafter by "please don't cut us again." And of course the recent Liberal years might be best described as "please don't cut us and then throw millions of dollars at high profile but stupid one-time projects like the Millennium Fund or Super-build."

The crisis that spawned this issue of FUSE was the Hamm government's elimination of the Nova Scotia Arts Council (NSAC). Ken Schwartz's feature brings us inside the movement to save the NSAC. If the story is yet to achieve a happy resolution, the intelligent and passionate response of the Nova Scotia arts community is deeply moving and inspiring. We need inspiration because there are many fights ahead for all of us who struggle to create or maintain cultural activities that aren't dominated by corporate interests. To explore the terms of that struggle from a grass-roots perspective, we've also convened a panel discussion amongst arts workers and administrators about the challenges of funding the arts.

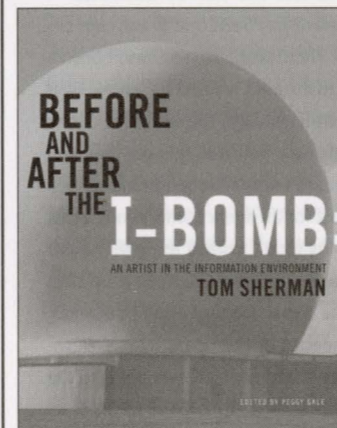
Perhaps the most insidious recent threat to anti-corporatist culture is the increasing insistence that public arts funding be matched through partnerships with the private sector.

The effect is to gradually erode the extent to which "public" arts institutions and organizations are able to keep the public interest in the forefront of their planning. The problem is most acute for larger institutions that have more cultural cachet to flog to their new corporate bedmates. In many cases large "public" institutions no longer receive the majority of their revenue from public sources. Is it any wonder that user fees for visiting public owned art collections are on their way up and the (would be) blockbuster exhibition has become the curatorial strategy of choice?

Yet, if you are feeling too small and unimportant to sell-out, don't fear. If you are young and hip (or can fake it), then you too have something to sell. Large multinational corporations are about the least young and hip institutions this side of a nursing home, but they have lots of cash and are always trying to buy themselves some sex appeal. Take Nike's recent attempt to colonize Toronto's art and activist heavy Kensington Market neighbourhood with Presto, their pseudo-grass-roots gallery/club. One minute you're a radical young artist and then "Presto," you've sold out. You don't even have to get famous first, just rub off a little of that hip street vibe on your new friends at Nike. Or you can keep reading FUSE. We won't solve your problems "presto," or sell you overpriced running shoes, but you'll hear from a lot of folks who have plenty of political substance to go along with their style.

—The Editors

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Flatland Funding

by Peter White

You don't hear a lot about Saskatchewan on the news and, when you do, it inevitably seems to be about farming and its crises or, especially in recent years, some heinous crime or legal situation. Maybe this exception was because I had inadvertently surfed into one of those regional reports on the CBC that has little to offer save a national perspective or obligation. Whatever the reason, I was more than mildly surprised to find a fresh-faced Fraser Institute researcher summarizing his recent study of Saskatchewan's prospects. His conclusions weren't a surprise, however. If Saskatchewan was to have a future it would have to slash public spending and services, lower taxes, privatize the few remaining crown corporations and reduce the size of government.

No, the surprise wasn't his conclusions — the unbending, unimaginative siren song of the right — but that anyone would pay any attention to them. Wasn't it only a little more than a dozen years ago that ideas such as these, in the form of the Conservative government of Grant Devine, created the largest deficit per capita in Canada, not to mention a level of graft and corruption that helped bring this unhappy episode in the province's history to a thankful end. In the process, a social and economic reciprocity that had long withstood not just the vagaries of an agricultural economy but geographic disadvantage and isolation, psychological distance, and, in more recent years, the decline of an already very modest population base, had been stretched to near the breaking point.

No doubt this report was connected to the province's present mood of political uncertainty, arising from the combination of a sitting New Democratic Party government having to soldier

on in less than great economic times without Roy Romanow, a national figure with direct lineage to the party's notable past, and pressure from the opposition Saskatchewan Party. Cobbled together from the ideological remains of the Devine Tories and stoked by the grassroots reaction of the Reform/Alliance party movement to which so much of western Canada is in thrall, the principal effect of the Saskatchewan Party has been to further exacerbate rifts between the more conservative rural and the less conservative urban parts of the province. But, politics of the moment aside, this report of the pre-

scriptions of an earnest young ideologue from outside the province could not have been more irrelevant to Saskatchewan's prospects or reality.

I mention this in what is a discussion of the Saskatchewan Arts Board not because the current political climate might mean trouble ahead for the board but because it probably doesn't. This is unquestionably good news. Unfortunately there is also a downside. Between economic stagnation and political indifference, the board has been revenue neutral — or, taking inflation into account, negative — for more than ten years now. Despite talk of arts stabilization in partnership with the federal government, there seems to be little prospect or motivation, at least in the near future, for change to the bottom line.

Since it was created in 1948 by the CCF government of Tommy Douglas, predecessor of the NDP, the financial attitude of most governments

— progressive like the NDP or otherwise — toward the board has been one of extreme circumspection. There probably also hasn't been a government that hasn't wanted to control or, if not control, at least align the activities of the board with its own political agenda. This was true in the board's very foundation. Initial discussions called for an agency with strong artist and community input. Instead the government took the board upon itself, setting it up as a division of the department of adult education. The independence of the board from government has been a battle fought ever since, in the case of the NDP often articulated in terms of its populist outlook and base. The board's commitment to professional standards, which became apparent very early on in its existence, has never squared with the NDP's preference for participatory and community based culture. As for the Tories, in full ideological flight in the late 1980s they came within a whisker of shutting the whole thing down. To be fair to them, they recognized the error of their ways and for the most part left the board alone. This had more to do with a well-founded fear of raising the wrath of a powerful arts lobby than in any real commitment to the arts, however.

The board was established following what had been very hard times in Saskatchewan — first the Depression, whose effects, exacerbated by dustbowl conditions, were especially profound for the province, followed by the war. It is much to the credit of the government of the day that in wanting to encourage participation and enjoyment of the arts as a part of a healthy citizenship, it created the board before it turned to any number of other needs. Indeed the board was the first agency of its kind in North America, preceding the Canada Council by a decade. From an initial mandate to stimulate cultural activity through its own organizational initiatives, by the late 1960s or so the board had taken its more familiar contemporary form as an administrative agency for cultural funding and policy development. The major exception is the board's visual arts collection, for which the board has retained sole responsibility virtually from its inception.¹

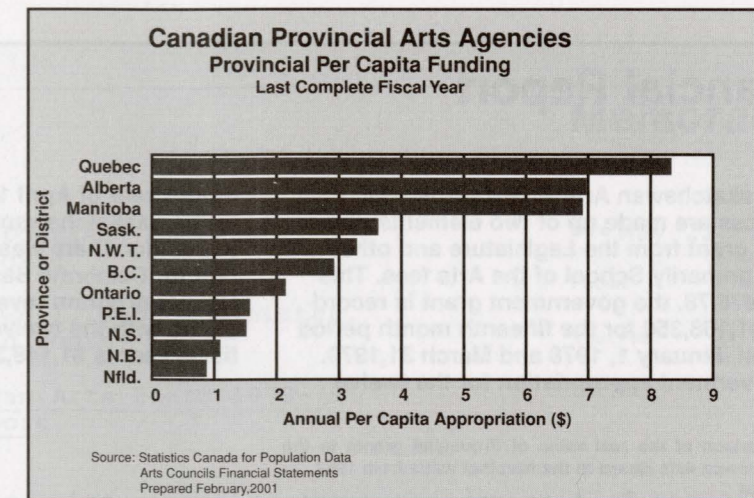
Over the years an arts community of remarkable size and vitality has developed in Saskatchewan.

In the year 2000-01, in a province with a population of less than a million, the board provided operations assistance to thirty-seven arts organizations, six provincial associations, ten artist-in-residence programs, four aboriginal groups for new cultural initiatives, and it dispersed project grants for creation, research, professional development and travel to some eighty individual artists and thirty odd smaller groups. In addition, the board purchased thirty visual arts works for its collection.²

Unfortunately, all this has been achieved with an expenditure of a little over \$3 million, a considerable portion of it sourced from lottery rather than tax revenues. This is not really a lot of money and, on a per-capita basis, lags behind the amount spent on the arts in the neighbouring Manitoba and — if you can ignore issues of process and professional input, which admittedly isn't easy — even Alberta.

The board likes to trumpet that it was the first and that it somehow embodies the cooperative spirit of Saskatchewan. In a province that is perceived to have less to offer than many places, it argues that the arts play a particularly significant role in assuring quality of life. It also emphasizes the economic benefits of the arts. While all this may be true, the accumulation of platitudes such as these around the board, even if they are circulated for public consumption and political effect, can be problematic. While the board's success as an institution cannot be questioned, providing stability and continuity to the arts in the province, it also has to be acknowledged that its economic stagnation means that it is increasingly limited in its ability to fulfill its mandate or adapt to changing circumstances. There is a tradeoff between this lack of dynamism and the vigorosity of cultural production in the province. Though this may be difficult to assess, it is nonetheless an issue that must be raised in any assessment of the board.

On a more positive note — and this is where Saskatchewan differs so much from Alberta, for example — the arts have achieved recognition as a serious presence in the life of the province. Groups, associations, as well as many individual artists are highly motivated, administratively



Source: Saskatchewan Arts Board website.

well organized and are not seen as altogether insignificant or taken for granted politically. In recent years the arts community has also had increasing responsibility not only for the board's adjudication and advisory processes but for its governance as well. A multi-year process that culminated in 1997 in bringing the administration of all cultural activity together under the umbrella of the board may not have achieved its objective of reconciling the longstanding tensions between professional and amateur arts in the province, or added a penny to the total pot, but it did produce a body of artists and arts administrators uncommonly skilled at negotiation and mediation. A cynic might argue that this is rather limited compensation for declining real dollar support and that the board remains arms length in principle only. Nonetheless, in the context of the participatory and often notably public character that is a distinctive aspect of life in Saskatchewan, these developments are not insignificant.

What of the future? It was the dream of Jane Turnbull Evans, a visual artist, keeper of the board's collection at the time of her death in 1998, and a passionate advocate for culture in Saskatchewan that it was only through greater independence from government that the arts could achieve the kind of direction and support that were necessary in a province where they were crucial. The creation of a foundation for the arts had been under discussion before Turnbull Evans died. Although some funds designated for the Foundation have since been donated, its actual start-up has been delayed because of limited resources. Whether the volume of small gifts upon which it will have to rely, given the relative absence of significant

private wealth in Saskatchewan, can or will materialize remains a very open question. Nonetheless it is a bold challenge that in some ways asks the people of Saskatchewan to put their money where their rhetoric is.

A final consideration is demographic changes that will inevitably transform all aspects of life in Saskatchewan. If the relationship and pressures surrounding the amateur versus professional debate have shifted with the increasing depopulation of rural regions and communities, similarly significant change can be anticipated over the next thirty years when it is estimated that more than half the population of the province will be of indigenous origin. To its credit, the board has been reasonably proactive in its support and advocacy of aboriginal arts, although a relatively paltry amount of its annual budget goes to indigenous recipients. Undoubtedly the board's will or capacity to truly embrace both the opportunities and challenges of these changes will have a profound effect not only on the future of the arts in Saskatchewan but also its own.

1. As of 2001, the Saskatchewan Arts Board collection included over 2,300 works by 580 Saskatchewan artists. For a history of the board in its early years, see W.A. Riddell, *Cornerstone for Culture: A History of the Saskatchewan Arts Board from 1948 to 1978* (Regina: Saskatchewan Arts Board, 1979).

2. These statistics are from the Saskatchewan Arts Board Annual Report for 2000-2001.

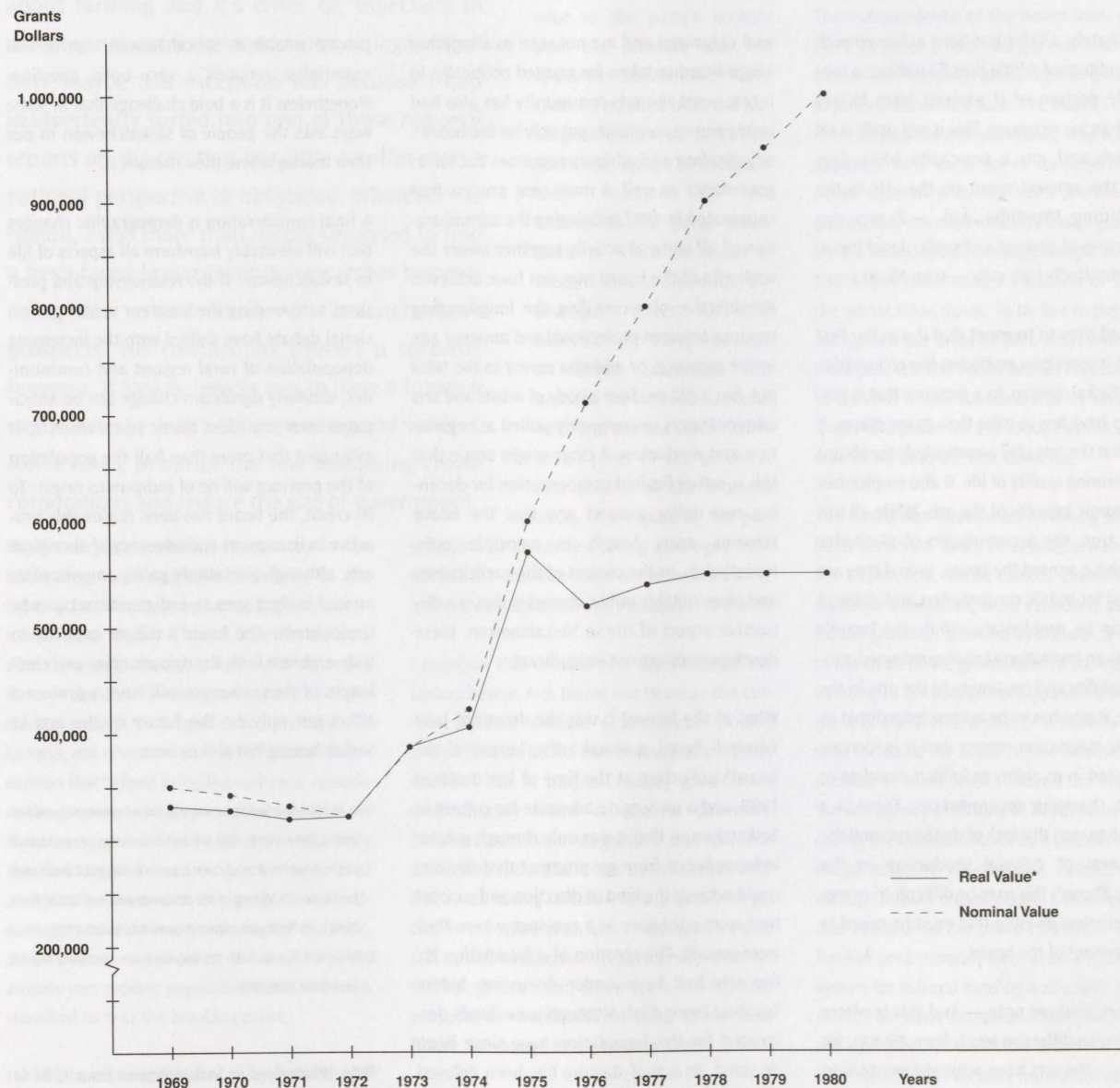
Peter White lived in Saskatchewan from 1984 to 1992 where he was director and curator of the Dunlop Art Gallery in Regina and director of the Mendel Art Gallery in Saskatoon.

Financial Report

The Saskatchewan Arts Board's financial resources are made up of two elements: the annual grant from the Legislature and other funds, primarily School of the Arts fees. This year, 1978/79, the government grant is recorded as \$1,168,350 for the fifteenth month period between January 1, 1978 and March 31, 1979. The government appropriation for the twelve

month year of April 1, 1978 to March 31, 1979 to the Saskatchewan Arts Board is \$950,000. In addition there was a one time only allocation for Celebrate Saskatchewan projects. The regular program revenue for the year coinciding with the twelve month government fiscal year is \$1,148,372.

A comparison of the real value of Provincial grants to the Saskatchewan Arts Board to the Nominal value from 1969 to 1979/80



* calculated by using the Saskatchewan Consumer Price Index from 1969-79 with 1971 as the base year (1971 = 100)



Government of Saskatchewan

Memorandum

From Robert C. Douglas, Secretary,
Treasury Board

To Liz Dowdeswell, Deputy Minister,
Culture and Youth

Re Saskatchewan Arts Board 1978-79
Annual Report.

Date May 22, 1980.

Phone

Your File

Our File

I am quite concerned about the contents of the Arts Board's latest annual report, particularly the material on pages 18, 19 and 20. I would appreciate it if you would forward to me the following information:

- (1) whether or not the material was routed to the Minister via your office, and if not, why not;
- (2) whether or not you or your officials were made aware of the contents prior to the report being tabled in the Legislature;
- (3) how we might prevent such a situation from occurring again?

I look forward to hearing from you.

R. C. Douglas
for Robert C. Douglas

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Of poetic ironies, propaganda machines and the claims for public sponsorship of culture

by Barbara Godard

Were it just a game, things would be getting interesting about now. The domino effect currently repositioning the cultural field within the social milieu has raised the longstanding tension between aesthetic and political discourses to new extremes. One small adjustment precipitates others, with the power to alter everything. The stakes are high in legitimating the claims of artistic practices in the public sphere, with unforeseeable consequences for forms of governance and social values. For culture is positioned now in a dialectic with democracy not, as it long was, as antidote to materialism.

A concatenation of different factors is initiating transformations in every aspect of the tangled web of culture, capital and the state in Canada. This volatile mix compounds the difficulty of reiterating claims for the public sponsorship of culture, which has been the tradition of art production in Canada. Yet such claims for public sponsorship are all the more urgent in view of the devolution of governmental responsibility for the cultural sphere to the corporate sector, whose infrastructure has historically been under-capitalized in Canada and so unable to sustain production. The tensions between the spheres of economy and culture while not new have taken a different turn, I would suggest, with a transformation in the central machinery of government. Increased rationality in government's decision-making processes that coordinate policy and action has conflated what had hitherto functioned as the semi-autonomous, often contradictory spheres of polity and culture. The delicate balancing act among separate spheres that characterized their past interaction in Canada has given way to a situation in which cultural activity functions as a direct arm of government. The current critical predicament of cultural policy is implicated in the crisis in state rationality responsible for the growth of the Canadian cultural sector since the 1950s as the ends of government are being redefined according to neo-liberal principles.

What's changing? How is the cultural sector responding? In the space of a few weeks in the spring of 2002, the symptoms of an ailing cultural sector reached a critical state. At the end of March, the Tory government of Nova Scotia

abruptly dismantled the Nova Scotia Arts Council (NSAC), which had been established in 1996 after much discussion and effort. In what has become habitual corporate style, the downsizing operation was precipitous. It took just one hour to occupy the office, confine staff, dismiss council members, fire the executive director, close the website and issue a press release for a replacement "Arts and Culture Council," a branch of the department of tourism and culture.¹ The last to be established and the first to be dismantled, the Nova Scotia Arts Council's

Services (GDS), which handles book distribution for about sixty small Canadian publishers, asked the courts for bankruptcy protection to enable it to restructure both the distribution end of the business and the related group of publishing imprints run by Stoddart-General. Described by Jack Stoddart as the ripple effect of the financial woes provoked by the policies of big box retailer Chapters, which used its controlling position in the book-selling business to demand deep discounts from publishers, and which delayed payments and returned great numbers of unsold books to publishers last year, the threatened collapse of the distributor has plunged the entire publishing industry into a crisis. Publishers have received no payment from the distributor for books sold since October before the busy Christmas season. Attempts to retrieve unsold books from warehouses have been blocked by attribution of inventory to the distributor, not the publishers. As unsecured creditors, the publishers will get nothing if General goes under. Nor will the authors to whom they in turn owe payment. And without money there will be no new books written or published. Much lauded

Gov't decision like a "kick in the stomach" for arts community

The Regional (30 April 2002).

history reflects the trajectory of cultural policy. Following the Tory government's restructuring of the Ontario Arts Council after 1995 to chop its funding, reorganize its operational processes and reallocate support of cultural activities to a foundation with funds dispensed by government supporters,² this abolition of NSAC confirms a trend in state sponsorship of the arts to give government an unlimited scope of directive power. Claiming a need for fiscal restraint, governments are undertaking the micromanagement of cultural grants in order to determine how funds are spent. Greater control is paradoxically exercised in the name of less government intervention.

At the end of April, in a separate chain of events inciting different responses, General Distribution

as an alternative to government hand outs, the marketplace failed to secure the exchange of books as commodities. The situation has such alarming implications that even the *Globe and Mail* uncharacteristically launched an appeal for "government bailouts of industry."³ Contrasting the contingencies of the small market faced by Canadian publishers with the economies of scale enabling the USA publishing industry to sell books at "bargain-basement prices," the *Globe* editorial called on government to support publishers, noting the high rate of return in federal tax revenue from its initial investment. The most compelling incentive for such support, however, is not economic but the unique contribution of the "Canadian literary community," which "nurtures a critical part of our national cultural identity." This position in favour of cultural

nationalism is somewhat unexpected: contradictorily, the editorial went on to recommend a restructuring of the publishing industry to allow more foreign competition.

Significantly, culture's legitimation is sought not on grounds of the aesthetic merits of particular works or practices, nor of a liberal discourse of the rights of individual free expression that would disembed the aesthetic from any social context, but on those of politics and the perceived interests of the nation. Writers' and publishers' associations have joined the struggle for public recognition of their claims and based their arguments more on economic than political logics. Still, along with the politicized rhetoric of Nova Scotia arts organizations, responsive to the exigencies of

to the arts community. The status of these councils has always been ambiguous since, although almost all their funding comes from parliamentary appropriations and their accounts are audited by government, they have had considerable autonomy in the aesthetic criteria they apply in awarding grants which have generally been completely independent of political direction. The delicate independence of these bodies has depended on their ability to negotiate the contradictory demands of accountability to state policy directives and autonomy of practices in the fields with which the policy is concerned. Councils have mediated this messy terrain, leaning at times toward bureaucratic practices, at others toward purely aesthetic defences of decisions on the basis of the peer-review principle as arbiter of artistic merit. This balance in turn

'CATASTROPHE' HITS BOOK INDUSTRY

'LAST TIME STODDART PAID ME, JESUS WAS IN SHORT PANTS'

Publishers fear for survival as distribution giant is granted bankruptcy protection

The National Post (1 May 2002).

their particular regional situation, the literary community appears to be elaborating a discourse of art and culture that explicitly addresses the new top-down configuration of government policy with its fusion of spheres. Whether decrying direct government intervention in Nova Scotia, or pleading for it on behalf of Canadian publishers, arts organizations are making their case in new forums, not in the court of public opinion, but in the seats of power — the law courts and halls of parliament. Consequently, they expose the underlying contradiction of any appeal to the autonomy of the aesthetic realm, inevitably shaped by state participation in the cultural sphere.

Historically in Canada, apologies for culture and assertions of aesthetic value have been complex and indirect. Beginning with Saskatchewan in the 1940s, all the provinces (except Alberta) and the federal government set up public, but not quite governmental bodies to distribute monies

rested upon certain assumptions about governance and art, namely that a "hands-off attitude" implying a separation of political and aesthetic discourses was the best policy for government to pursue,⁴ and that what counts as aesthetic are cultural practices not directly bound to the socio-political sphere. Indirection is no longer a feature of artistic production or state policy initiatives, however. Not only has art become increasingly concerned with blurring the public and the private in the contemporary preoccupation with the politics of representation, but the arm's-length principle, cornerstone of federal and provincial cultural policy since the 1950s, is being supplanted by direct government funding of targeted activities in the cultural domain. Ironically, this reintroduces the very political control the system was originally devised to prevent. Such control is now used as much to attack as to initiate cultural policies and institutions.

If the context in which aesthetic value is debated has changed, so too have the sites and terms of the debate. Strikingly, there has been an escalation in the lexicon of crisis.

While the dismantling of NSAC provokes a "cataclysm,"⁵ the demise of General Publishing is nothing short of a "disaster"⁶ that "spell[s] a death knell" for many English-language publishers, according to a press release from the Association of Canadian Publishers and the Literary Press Group.⁷ Responding to a predicament of unprecedented magnitude, artists and their organizations have taken explicitly economic and political positions in defense of the cultural as industry. Telling, in this regard, is a letter written by the Writers' Union of Canada to the heritage minister which highlights the "dire financial straits" facing professional writers "if ameliorating action is not taken."⁸ Her assistance is requested in ensuring that authors' royalties are protected in any restructuring of the publisher, that something be done to remedy the immediate cash flow

problem of small publishers, and that the Bankruptcy Act be amended so that authors would have secured creditor status. This third request is most unusual, and the Union recognizes that such a change to a financial act is not within the purview of the heritage minister. "Moral suasion" is all the minister might exercise, an acknowledgement that foregrounds the predicament of culture confined to the realm of the ethical imagination. Without economic resources, however, there would be no literary production. And the extent of the financial difficulties, outlined in detail in the press release, is produced by the situation in which the estimated eighteen million dollars due to GDS is pledged first to the Bank of Nova Scotia and then to Jack Stoddart to the amount of twenty million dollars. Publishers and authors among many unsecured creditors will likely never see the three million dollars owed them. Whereas this would constitute only one bad account among many for such creditors as telephone or courier companies, this sum is almost the entire earned revenue of publishers. And in the continuing fallout from General's financial

troubles, independent booksellers face a new period of uncertainty, since many of their sales are small-press books put out by publishers at risk of collapsing.⁹

Publishers' associations have pleaded their case unsuccessfully in court in an effort to get their books back from GDS and to secure some payment for what is owed them. In addition to this direct action, they have also taken the unprecedented initiative of writing open letters to the president of the Bank of Nova Scotia, the largest single secured creditor. The editors of Véhicule Press stress the long-term success of their own company and point out the contradiction in the Bank of Nova Scotia's insistence that they and other small publishers should adopt bad business practices and give up any first claim they may have on receivables, monies for books sold by GDS.¹⁰ The Bank of Nova Scotia alone, they suggest, has the power to intervene so that book publishers might get some money. Should it not do so, they charge, the bank would be acting "like a school-yard bully." In an understated final appeal to nationalism, they suggest this would also be an opportunity for the bank "to support Canadian writers and publishers who contribute so much to the culture of this country." There are no

Small publishers lose battle to get money from distributor

BY MARINA STRAUSS
RETAILING REPORTER

A group of small publishers lost their court battle yesterday to get an estimated \$16-million from their

Nova Scotia, its largest secured creditor.

Scotiabank had threatened to pull the plug on its financing commitment to General — thus pushing it into receivership — if the

The Globe and Mail (13 June 2002)

strong claims for culture to bind the nation through ideas and images in a letter to the president of the Bank of Nova Scotia from the Writers' Union.¹¹ Rather it is the export of knowledge that is at issue. Small presses are the "gateway" for first-time writers who it is expected will go on "to maintain [Canadian writing's] international presence." These presses ensure a diversity of stories for readers.

Without them "Canadian content in bookstores would be severely diminished."

Neither the claims of aesthetic excellence nor of nationalism are pressed here in an address to corporate capital's global reach. Nor are they an issue in Darren Wershler-Henry's account of the bitter irony of the GDS debacle for Coach House Books. For Coach House, the apparently winning combination of a grassroots best-selling poetry book, *Eunoia*, subsequently awarded the Griffin Prize for poetry, resulting in unprecedented sales, has produced no revenue for the press, since GDS has not paid them. "Our big poetic irony," he notes, is that the "unprecedented success of small-press publishing is turning into

Committee concerning the Financial Measures Act that would abolish the Nova Scotia Arts Council. In equally strong words, the arts coalition organizing against it warns that the implications of the government's method in this matter have grave consequences for democratic processes. More than a threat to the arts community, this action "shows lack of respect for democratic rights and processes, and a disdain for the public institutions. This issue is about freedom of expression. It's about respect for the laws and people of this province." A key point in these objections raised by Chris Lloyd, a visual artist and director of the Khyber Centre for the Arts, is that the government failed to consult with the council as required by legislation or

Arm's-length funding over Arts council's death opens local culture to political patronage

Halifax News (29 March 2002).

potentially crippling hardship. The more books we've sold, the more money we'll lose."¹² The problems, he implies, are those of the corporate sector. This debacle is not caused by "grassroots can-do capitalism," idealistic and incompetent, but by the activities of a commercial distributor backed by one of the country's wealthiest banks. Wershler-Henry places the blame squarely in the arena of the capitalist marketplace, where inequities in the trading system are making the rich richer and the poor more impoverished. Canadian small presses are not "uncompetitive," he asserts, but the present situation is not a "fair fight featuring two evenly matched welterweights" but one of them "being sucker punched from behind by an 800-pound gorilla." This allegory of capitalism is a cautionary tale for everyone: "If this is the right wing's idea of the market correcting itself, then more than the Canadian publishing sector needs to watch its back." The discourse of cultural domination is shifted back onto the economic terrain where positions are identified as politically partisan.

The gloves are off and no holds barred in addresses to the Nova Scotia Law Amendments

with any other community arts organization in the restructuring of the culture division and programmes of the department of tourism and culture. In contrast to the grassroots consultative process over many years which resulted in the creation of NSAC, the decision to close it down was made by a small group of politicians and bureaucrats meeting behind closed doors. For Lloyd, it is "this lack of consultation, communication and real dialogue which stings the most" in this affair, for it indicates a lack of commitment to representative democracy on the part of the politicians who, he charges, are treating "our legislative process like a game."¹³

The implications of this decision by administrative fiat become clearer in the light of the government's rationale for the change in institutional structure for its arts grants. The replacement council, it is affirmed, "will better serve the broader needs of government," not necessarily of artists. Already the government has "commandeered the NSAC endowment fund" of one million dollars for its coffers. And the new decision-making structures for grants that have been set in place intimate how govern-

ment's needs will be met. Grants will be awarded, charges Lloyd, "based on who your cousin is, or from what region you live in or how popular your paintings or songs might be with the tourists." In short, grants to artists will become another occasion for government patronage, rather than the recognition of artistic excellence by peer review, which maintained a membrane between politics and culture. For two crucial features of NSAC are to be omitted in the new committee charged to administer arts grants, namely the practice of peer assessment and the principle of arm's-length organization. These two key principles were linked as cornerstones in the support of excellence when the act was passed to set up NSAC in 1995. They have enabled NSAC and other such councils throughout the world to operate "without political influence or interference." Art in this context is not mere propaganda. However, the coalition contends that it has been NSAC's "steadfast refusal to compromise the arm's-length principle" and submit to the will of government by serving its "broader needs" that has been its "crime," not the inefficiency or lack of accountability implied

Equally notable, another presentation to the Nova Scotia legislature objects to the dismantling of NSAC in largely economic terms. Carol Sinclair's speech emphasizes the importance of this legislation for the region, not to advance the claims for a distinctive local identity in which culture plays a crucial role, but within the discourse of the political economy of regional development. Citing her own case as an example of the reversal of the brain drain effected by the establishment of NSAC, which brought her back to Nova Scotia to become a volunteer in many arts organizations including the NSAC, although most of her income came from theatre work elsewhere in Canada and the USA, Sinclair highlighted the benefits of culture for the Nova Scotia economy. Culture in Nova Scotia, she asserts, "outruns GNP profit in logging, mining and fishing combined." And unlike coal and steel, it is "a renewable resource."¹⁵ Indeed, it is Nova Scotia's "most legitimate and most defensible twenty-first-century industry." The province's politicians and business people are using the wrong metaphors, however, when they speak of "mining talent" or of culture as the "fish of the

Hamm government misunderstands art

The Sunday Daily News (31 March 2002).

in the Financial Measures Act. The rationale of greater economy is the alibi for what is in fact a purely political decision. In future, the ministry proposes to use peer-assessment in an unspecified "advisory capacity." Consequently, the "real power for funding will reside with the political parties and government bureaucrats."¹⁴ This insistence on the partisan nature of such political intervention that will limit the expression of critical artwork positions the argument for arm's-length adjudication as a politicized challenge to power rather than as an idealized appeal to individual rights of expression or the autonomy of the aesthetic realm.

future." For both of these industries have recently collapsed. "Gardening" is a better metaphor for such a "living thing" as talent, and it needs to be carefully "cultivated" if it is to thrive and survive into the future and not left to "die of exposure." While it is the present bouquet of talent that is Nova Scotia's pride beyond its borders and within, where it attracts visitors to the province, Nova Scotia governments have done little historically to nourish it. And the brief stimulus offered by NSAC has been dashed by the Tory government's "defensive" measure in abolishing the council in a spirit of "tightening belts" just when it should be acting assertively.

Tories kill provincial arts council

Minister says move means more money for culture; artists cry foul

The Halifax Herald (28 March 2002).

Sinclair's many anecdotes of the financial difficulties of artists in Nova Scotia and of the negative outcomes of such limited thinking about culture do not expand on the ecological possibilities of her metaphor into a synergistic interactive system of cultural and regional development, however. She turns instead to illustrate the economic difficulties of being an artist in Nova Scotia and to critiquing the government's rationale for the structural change in arts grants, namely the appeal to servicing "broader needs." The government's action will contradictorily narrow the scope of these needs. The Council consulted widely in "Listening Tours" around the province, with members paying their own expenses in community consultations where they met with artists from every ethnic and age group, and every artistic practice from quilter through to choreographer. This enabled them to fulfill their legal mandate "to make Nova Scotia a place where artists' voices are heard." In addition to this image of the council's diversity of outreach, Sinclair challenges the government's criteria of "broad" in economic terms. The minister claims that he wants to see more money going to rural areas. However, under the existing Council fifty-seven percent of the money went to these areas, although eighty percent of Nova Scotia artists live in the Halifax region. In conclusion she touches on the confiscation of the Endowment Fund of NSAC and the loss of its promises for

future artistic production. The McConnell Foundation and others who had invested in NSAC will also withdraw their financial support, she notes. The government is lying when it claims the opposite. In every respect, as she concretely demonstrates, the decision to dismantle NSAC was made not on terms of increased economic benefit for the province's coffers. On the contrary, it will lose revenue she implies. But the government will increase political control over spending on culture.

What is striking in these encounters between aesthetic discourses and political exigencies is the way in which the debate is being framed explicitly in relation to the authority of governmental structures to manage and steer their production in the aesthetic realm. The discourses emerging from the field of cultural production address issues of concern to the polity as a whole. Implicitly the arguments advanced in defense of artistic practices formulate notions of collective value and the public good. Explicitly, however, they are directed at the unequal distribution of economic resources and the structures of governance undergoing a radical restructuring that will increase inequality. The conflation of semi-autonomous spheres of activity in a technocratic aim to eliminate contradictions and anomalies on the part of government now coincides with a move by corporate capital to consolidate and expand its power to link every sector so that a market economy will become a market society. Significantly, however, this same conflation of spheres is transforming the terrain for the defense of cultural praxis. Discourses defending the public role of culture now address political and economic issues directly to show the illusoriness of democratic decision-making and the irrationality of the market-place. These are, of course, particular articulations of aesthetic value in the present historical conjuncture, not cultural universals.

As these debates were occurring, the newspapers featured a number of other stories which, I would suggest, are pertinent in the present instance. "Arts funding gets massive boost," the federal and provincial governments announced in Toronto at the end of May, when they finally resolved their differences to hand out \$230 mil-

lion to Toronto cultural institutions. The sums are staggering when compared to the receivables owed to publishers and the Endowment Fund of NSAC. But foreign architects and construction workers, not artists, will be the direct beneficiaries of these funds. The current edifice complex has indeed provided photo ops for government leaders (who incidentally are not looking at each other or even in the same direction) to display their personal generosity,¹⁶ but may well induce a crisis in the future similar to that provoked by the centennial building spree.

Canadian Public Administration 22. 2 (1979): 281.

5. "Tories Trample Democracy"
6. Letter from Writers' Union to Sheila Copps, Minister of Heritage, 6 May 2002. <http://www.aliennated.net/article.php?sid=329>.
7. "Lifeline for One Publisher Means Potential Death Knell for Many Publishers," Press Release from Association of Canadian Publishers and the Literary Press Group of Canada, 23 May 2002. <http://www.aliennated.net/article.php?sid=322>.
8. Letter of 6 May 2002. <http://www.aliennated.net/article.php?sid=329>.
9. Steve Smith, "Writing on the Wall: New desperation for city's small booksellers," *Eye*, 13 June 2002.
10. Véhicule: Open Letter to the Bank of Nova Scotia, 16 May

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sequences for democratic and social values.

Notes:

1. "Tories Trample Democracy: Fundamental Principles at Stake," Save Our Arts Council Coalition, Press Release, 3 April 2002, <http://khyberarts.ns.ca/hyper/soac.pr.html>.
2. For more detailed analysis of the Ontario Arts Council see my "Resignifying Culture" in *Money Value Art*, Andrew Paterson and Sally McKay eds. Toronto: YYZ, 2001: 74-97.
3. "Writing a better ending for the publishers," *Globe and Mail*, 2 May 2002, A18.
4. Frank Milligan, "The Canada Council as a Public Body,"

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 (902) 423-4456 or network@culture.ns.ca

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Date: Thursday, April 18, 2002
 Time: 11:00 AM to 2:00 PM
 Place: Start at Grand Parade

BRING FAMILY AND FRIENDS!

Tories kill provincial arts council

Minister money f

The Halifax Herald (28 Marc

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lion to Toronto cultural institutions. The sums are staggering when compared to the receivables owed to publishers and the Endowment Fund of NSAC. But foreign architects and construction workers, not artists, will be the direct beneficiaries of these funds. The current edifice complex has indeed provided photo ops for government leaders (who incidentally are not looking at each other or even in the same direction) to display their personal generosity,¹⁶ but may well induce a crisis in the future similar to that provoked by the centennial building spree. Theatres, concert halls, museums, mushroomed throughout the country with the aid of government gifts, but there was no money in the Canada Council's coffers for the activities that might have filled their empty auditoriums. Elsewhere on the front page one could read about the investigations launched by the RCMP into the cronyism in the awarding of federal government contracts to friends and contributors. Patronage is alive and well on Parliament Hill, but its beneficiaries are businessmen, not artists. Further evidence of the interlocking interests of capital, politics and knowledge production has been the subject of much stormy debate in the Russell Mills affair. The owners of vertically integrated CanWest Corporation dictatorially fired the publisher of the Ottawa Citizen for having published an editorial critical of the prime minister, confirming thus the complete integration of representation, power and finance. In such a convergence, is it any wonder the gloves are on as aesthetic discourses attempt to hit more directly at such a monolith? How the welterweight will fare in these particular ongoing cases is, of course, uncertain. The outcome, however, will undoubtedly have consequences for democratic and social values.

Notes:

1. "Tories Trample Democracy: Fundamental Principles at Stake," Save Our Arts Council Coalition, Press Release, 3 April 2002, <http://khyberarts.ns.ca/hyper/soac.pr.html>.
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8. Letter of 6 May 2002. <http://www.alienated.net/article.php?sid=329>.
9. Steve Smith, "Writing on the Wall: New desperation for city's small booksellers," *Eye*, 13 June 2002.
10. Véhicule: Open Letter to the Bank of Nova Scotia, 16 May 2002. <http://www.alienated.net/article.php?sid=313>.
11. Writers' Union of Canada, Open Letter to Bank of Nova Scotia, 21 May 2002. <http://www.alienated.net/article.php?sid=328>.
12. Darren Wershler-Henry, "Our big poetic irony," *Globe and Mail*, 1 June 2002, R11.
13. "Save the Arts Council-the struggle continues," 20 May 2002. http://khyberarts.ns.ca/hyper/nsac_may20.html.
14. "Tories Trample Democracy"
15. "Arts community comes before the Legislature," http://khyberarts.ns.ca/hyper/nsac_may11.html.
16. Caroline Mallan, "Arts funding gets massive boost," *Toronto Star*, 1 June 2002: A6.

Barbara Godard teaches social and political thought at York University. Her essays on cultural discourse have appeared in *Ghosts in the Machine: Women and Cultural Policy in Canada and Australia* and *Money Art Value, as well as in FUSE*.

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in support of the
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Place: Start at Grand Parade

BRING FAMILY AND FRIENDS!

From: Premier Nova Scotia <PREMIER@gov.ns.ca>
To: <cloyd@khyberarts.ns.ca>
Date: Thursday, 14 March, 2002 3:51 pm
Subject: Re: Funding for the Arts

On behalf of Premier Hamm, thank you for your e-mail correspondence of March 7, 2002.

Your correspondence is being reviewed, and you can expect a reply shortly. Thank you once again for writing.

Sincerely,

Pat Lunn
Correspondence Coordinator
Office of the Premier

Reference Number: #030802016

>>> chris lloyd <cloyd@khyberarts.ns.ca> 03/07/02 11:46PM >>>

February 22, 2002.

To the Honourable John Hamm
Premier of Nova Scotia
MLA Pictou Centre
Province of Nova Scotia

Dear Mr. Hamm,

Please accept this letter, copies of which are being forwarded to the Minister responsible for Culture and the Minister responsible for Education Nova Scotia.

On the weekend of September 14-16, 2001 representatives from Artist-Run Centres in Atlantic Canada met in Halifax for the ARC/ARC conference hosted by eyelevelgallery. Artist-Run Centres (ARC's) are non-profit organizations directed by boards composed of a majority of practicing contemporary visual artists. The principal mandate of these centres is to encourage research, production, presentation, promotion and dissemination of new works in contemporary visual arts. There are 13 ARC's in the four Atlantic provinces that are part of a national network of over 100 centres across Canada. The artist run centre movement is over 30 years old with centres in our region ranging from 3 to 25 years in operation. These galleries and production facilities are centres for Research and Development for contemporary visual culture. They are access points for artists in all disciplines, local communities, visitors to our region and the general public. They are tremendously important for the development of artists and defining what is unique in the culture of our region.

Currently all 13 centres in Atlantic Canada receive less than adequate Provincial funding. This lack of Provincial funding means that the ARC's cannot access more Federal Funding (through organizations such as the Canada Council for the Arts, often the main funding source for ARC's). As you must already know there is no such thing as 100% federal funding anymore, and most Federal programs are contingent on both Provincial and Municipal contributions. Our region is missing out on hundreds of thousands of dollars because of lack of Provincial support for Artist-Run Centres; that money is instead going to Ontario and Quebec where funding for the arts remains at the highest levels.

For the last several years the Federal government has been reinvesting in the Canada Council for the Arts; it is time for the Provincial governments in Atlantic Canada to make similar investments. All Artist-Run Centres in this region need at least a \$30,000 annual operating funding increase to maintain quality programming and meet growing demands.

Secure sustainable operating funding for our centres will be of an enormous benefit to our region. Artist-Run Centres reflect their communities; an investment in ARC's is an investment in our communities. Vibrant centres are reasons for our best artists to stay in the region instead of moving to central Canada as so many already do. Every provincial government in Atlantic Canada is continually trying to enhance companies to relocate here; a vibrant arts community is a "quality of life" benefit that helps to attract businesses to our region. Additional funding would help with job

From: Premier Nova Scotia <PREMIER@gov.ns.ca>
Reply-To: PREMIER@gov.ns.ca
To: <cloyd@khyberarts.ns.ca>
Date: Tuesday, 9 April, 2002 11:17 am
Subject: Re: Proposed Arts and Culture Council is not arms-length
(This is to acknowledge receipt of your email to Premier John F. Hamm.)

This is to acknowledge receipt of your email to Premier John F. Hamm.

Please be assured your email will be brought to the Premier's attention.

Andrea Kelley
Administrative Assistant to the Premier

From: Premier Nova Scotia <PREMIER@gov.ns.ca>
Reply-To: PREMIER@gov.ns.ca
To: <cloyd@khyberarts.ns.ca>
Date: Wednesday, 10 April, 2002 1:03 am
Subject: Re: Another Outrage
(This is to acknowledge receipt of your email to Premier John F. Hamm.)

This is to acknowledge receipt of your email to Premier John F. Hamm.

Please be assured your email will be brought to the Premier's attention.

Andrea Kelley
Administrative Assistant to the Premier

From: Premier Nova Scotia <PREMIER@gov.ns.ca>
Reply-To: PREMIER@gov.ns.ca
To: <cloyd@khyberarts.ns.ca>
Date: Tuesday, 16 April, 2002 9:04 am
Subject: Re: This week at the Khyber
(This is to acknowledge receipt of your email to Premier John F. Hamm.)

This is to acknowledge receipt of your email to Premier John F. Hamm.

Please be assured your email will be brought to the Premier's attention.

Andrea Kelley
Administrative Assistant to the Premier

From: Premier Nova Scotia <PREMIER@gov.ns.ca>
Reply-To: PREMIER@gov.ns.ca
To: <cloyd@khyberarts.ns.ca>
Date: Sunday, 28 April, 2002 10:05 pm
Subject: Re: Minister's reasoning unacceptable
(This is to acknowledge receipt of your email to Premier John F. Hamm.)

This is to acknowledge receipt of your email to Premier John F. Hamm.

Please be assured your email will be brought to the Premier's attention.

Andrea Kelley
Administrative Assistant to the Premier

From: Premier Nova Scotia <PREMIER@gov.ns.ca>
Reply-To: PREMIER@gov.ns.ca
To: <cloyd@khyberarts.ns.ca>
Date: Sunday, 2 June, 2002 6:49 pm
Subject: Re: You're not paying any attention, are you?
(This is to acknowledge receipt of your email to Premier John F. Hamm.)

This is to acknowledge receipt of your email to Premier John F. Hamm.

Please be assured your email will be brought to the Premier's attention.

Andrea Kelley
Administrative Assistant to the Premier

From: Premier Nova Scotia <PREMIER@gov.ns.ca>
Reply-To: PREMIER@gov.ns.ca
To: <cloyd@khyberarts.ns.ca>
Date: Wednesday, 10 April, 2002 12:38 am
Subject: Re: Nova Scotia Arts Council
(This is to acknowledge receipt of your email to Premier John F. Hamm.)

This is to acknowledge receipt of your email to Premier John F. Hamm.

Please be assured your email will be brought to the Premier's attention.

Andrea Kelley
Administrative Assistant to the Premier

From: Premier Nova Scotia <PREMIER@gov.ns.ca>
Reply-To: PREMIER@gov.ns.ca
To: <cloyd@khyberarts.ns.ca>
Date: Wednesday, 10 April, 2002 10:04 pm
Subject: Re: response
(This is to acknowledge receipt of your email to Premier John F. Hamm.)

This is to acknowledge receipt of your email to Premier John F. Hamm.

Please be assured your email will be brought to the Premier's attention.

Andrea Kelley
Administrative Assistant to the Premier

From: Premier Nova Scotia <PREMIER@gov.ns.ca>
Reply-To: PREMIER@gov.ns.ca
To: <cloyd@khyberarts.ns.ca>
Date: Sunday, 28 April, 2002 8:23 pm
Subject: Re: The Khyber takes issue with latest excuses from Rodney MacDonald
(This is to acknowledge receipt of your email to Premier John F. Hamm.)

This is to acknowledge receipt of your email to Premier John F. Hamm.

Please be assured your email will be brought to the Premier's attention.

Andrea Kelley
Administrative Assistant to the Premier

From: Premier Nova Scotia <PREMIER@gov.ns.ca>
Reply-To: PREMIER@gov.ns.ca
To: <cloyd@khyberarts.ns.ca>
Date: Saturday, 4 May, 2002 9:22 am
Subject: Re: FW: Broken record?
(This is to acknowledge receipt of your email to Premier John F. Hamm.)

This is to acknowledge receipt of your email to Premier John F. Hamm.

Please be assured your email will be brought to the Premier's attention.

Andrea Kelley
Administrative Assistant to the Premier



A Principle in Exile:

by Ken Schwartz

the Elimination of the Nova Scotia Arts Council

In the past three months the Conservative government of Premier John Hamm has eradicated the principle of arm's length funding from the cultural landscape of Nova Scotia. While many are still in shock, some citizens are asking profound questions about what this unprecedented action means for the future of publicly funded art and the fundamental principles of transparency and public consultation in our democratically elected governments. Ken Schwartz, chair of the Save Our Arts Council campaign, takes us inside the controversy.

On Wednesday, 27 March 2002, representatives of the Nova Scotia government, including lawyers and security guards, descended on the Halifax offices of the Nova Scotia Arts Council. After government representatives secured the front door, executive director Tim Leary was summarily dismissed and the remaining staff were rounded up and informed that the arts council was being dismantled. Simultaneously, letters were faxed to members of the volunteer council informing them that their services were no longer required. In place of the Nova Scotia Arts Council (NSAC), tourism minister Rodney MacDonald announced that he would be creating a new "arts and culture council" that would, in his words, "have responsibility for the broader objectives of government."

The professional arts community of Nova Scotia reacted with shock and anger. It was by far the most callous and destructive piece of cultural policy introduced by a provincial government in living memory. What made the closure of the NSAC particularly infuriating was the lack of respect shown for the cultural sector: the NSAC was dismantled without warning, public consultation or the slightest respect for the volunteers who had built the public organization from scratch. The council was, in the words of writer and columnist Frank MacKay, "taken out behind the barn and shot." Those who had played a role in its creation felt powerless. In the hours following "Black Wednesday," as March 27 was quickly dubbed, more than one person was quoted asking pointed questions about the

fragile nature of our democracy, and looking to a bleak future where our government could destroy public institutions without warning or mandate.

It was a radically different mood that permeated the artistic community in September 1996, when the first meeting of the Nova Scotia Arts Council took place in Halifax. The culmination of twenty years of advocacy, publicly funded studies and a blueprint provided by a fifteen-member steering committee, the provincial council was the last to be created in Canada. Representing the geographical, cultural and artistic diversity of the province it served, the NSAC set out to create Nova Scotia's first arm's-length public funding agency, a body that would be free of political interference from elected officials or those who worked in their departments. Henceforth, art would not be funded according to what riding it was being created in, or its potential tourism spin-off, or how well the project served to promote a positive image of the province or its government. Currying favour with entrenched cultural bureaucrats would no longer result in arts funding, nor would having politically well-connected Nova Scotians sitting on your board. The criteria for funding would now be excellence, measured by a jury of artistic peers based on programs, criteria and policies established independent of government interference.

Within a year, the NSAC was delivering programs to arts organizations, and, for the first time in Nova Scotia's history of arts funding, individuals. As with all changes, some were apprehensive about this ground shift in how public funding for the arts was administered, and the system, like any devised to apportion public money, was not perfect. The initial level of funding necessitated the establishment of multi-disciplinary juries, which are often feared by applicants who are more accustomed to articulating projects or seasons of work to peers within their discipline, the process currently employed by the Canada Council. Some had become comfortable with their easy relationship with the department of cultural affairs, and saw little to gain and much to lose in the change. The province's four largest arts organizations, slated to come under the auspices of the Nova Scotia Arts Council after other programs were established in year three of its operation, successfully resisted the transfer to the arm's-length agency, citing fears their funding would be poached by juries eager to fund smaller organizations. Overall, however, the increased funding

opportunities to individuals and organizations were received warmly and the quality of applications became very high as applicants learned how to approach the new system of grant allocation.

No sooner had the council firmly established itself through its significant impact on the community than the 1999 election brought a change of government, signaling dark days ahead. The Conservative government of John Hamm introduced a budget that drastically cut the NSAC's budget disproportional to the cuts received by the department of tourism and culture, and offered no commitments for the restoration of adequate funding levels. Even more troubling was the government's repeated attempts to circumvent the legislated process for nominations to the council. When these attempts failed, the government dragged its feet on accepting the nominating committee's recommendations, ensuring that the council did not have a full membership (as required by legislation) or, at times, even a quorum.

After months of neglect at the hands of government, the Nova Scotia Cultural Network, Nova Scotia's leading arts and culture advocacy organization, held a public forum in Halifax on February 13 of this year. Entitled "The NSAC at the Crossroads," the assembled panel of arts council members, former members and staff painted a bleak picture for the seventy-odd attendees. Since the election of the Conservative government many programs had to be suspended, and the council had been asked to submit a three-year plan that included a further five percent cut in the coming fiscal year. In addition, the council would soon be without a quorum of active members. In short, the NSAC was crippled, and the panelists sounded the alarm bells. The message was clear: save the council now, or lose it.

Members of Nova Scotia's cultural community swiftly initiated a campaign to "Save Our Arts Council" (SOAC). Bringing the consequences of the Tory government's policies front and centre, the campaign focused on demanding that the government restore adequate funding levels and honour its legal obligations to appoint council members in a timely fashion and without political interference. The government responded in general terms, boasting a five-million dollar investment in culture and promising to speed up the appointments process.

Coincidentally, the department of tourism and culture was in the process of conducting a series of public consultations on the future of the department. For the first time, department officials visited communities throughout Nova Scotia to seek input on a series of changes to the way the department delivered programs and sought input. While there were many items on the agenda, including a proposal for establishing regional advisory committees, the future of the NSAC was not. Indeed, department officials spoke of the important symbiotic relationship between the arm's-length agency and the department, and the two bodies were articulated as being important partners in cultural development in the province.

On the agenda or not, supporters of the NSAC spoke eloquently at these meetings in support of council and asked the government to make the stabilization of its funding and the appointment of council members a priority. As the minister was absent from all of these meetings, his officials nodded gratefully, and promised to deliver the message.

Two weeks following the completion of these sessions, thirty-six hours before the Easter holiday, the department of tourism and culture, within a matter of minutes, carried out the carefully orchestrated operation that closed the council and silenced its outspoken executive director (who now must negotiate with the department over his severance). There can be little doubt that the department had been planning this action throughout the public consultations around the province. It is equally apparent that the department was studious in concealing their plans. The minister made no comments to council that he was concerned with its operation, nor did he conduct any press conferences or issue releases outlining future directions in policy until the day of the shutdown. The strategy was so secretive that backbenchers in the Tory caucus were not informed of the action and only learned about it in the next day's morning paper.

Perhaps this strategy seemed foolproof to those who advised the Minister. After all, the precedent for this kind of action is well-established in corporate Canada, where dismissals and re-organization are usually accompanied by security guards who kindly offer a cardboard box for personal effects, twenty accompanied minutes to fill it and an escort out of the building. This way of dealing with a situation, management would argue, is necessary to protect valu-

able resources (i.e., data) from theft or vandalism by angry, resentful employees who are bent on leaving (or taking) a parting gift. It also effectively silences individuals who might use their positions in the dying days of their contract to demonstrate the true value of their positions and offer alternative explanations for cutbacks or eliminated institutions. Once a body is gone, it's infinitely harder to rally for re-establishment. Given that the professional arts community had recently spoken loudly for increased support for council, advance notice would serve to rally troops at a most inopportune time for government.

To further ensure a smooth and quick transition the public relations personnel came up with a soothing, amiable, almost paternal message for the professional artists of Nova Scotia who were informed of the council's demise:

We believe this is a natural evolution in the way in which government has chosen to support arts and culture in this province and the foundation established by the Arts Council will serve us well into the future.

We want to take this opportunity to assure you that the service you have received in the past will continue. Your files will be transferred to the department in the very near future, and once staff has an opportunity to conduct a review, you will be contacted. We trust you will be patient as we go through this transition.

- excerpted from a 27 March 2002 letter to NSAC clients

Clearly the message attempts to obscure the demolition, using language that idealizes the actions as building on existing strengths, on continuity and on an action based on progressive and careful thinking.

When almost one-hundred arts-community leaders gathered at Saint Mary's Art Gallery the next morning at 11 AM, it was clear the strategy had colossally backfired. Representing all disciplines, this group echoed the initial shock voiced by some with far more precision, dismantling the government's position point by point. The key elements of the government's strategy became, in effect, the very flashpoints that mobilized the arts community politically as it had never been previously. The fact that the department concealed



March to legislative buildings in Halifax. Photo: Ron Carr. Courtesy: Two Planks and a Passion.

its plans from the public and consulted no one on the wisdom of closing council was received as a patronizing insult that made it virtually impossible for the minister to maintain (or establish) trust between his office and clients. His argument that it would be business as usual, therefore, was met with derision and a suspicion that his government simply couldn't abide the arm's length principle, and counting on the relative weakness of the culture lobby in Nova Scotia, discarded it. After some ninety minutes of deliberation, working committees were formed to formulate a press release asking for the minister's resignation, along with a full-page ad asking for the same. Some twelve-hundred dollars in cash was thrown in a pile in the middle of the gallery to assist with paying for public relations (the fund would later reach almost \$10,000), and the approval for this action was unanimous amongst those present.

With the assistance of the Nova Scotia Cultural Network, a draft of the resignation ad was circulated, and response was mixed. While virtually everyone wanted to make a strong statement condemn-

ing the government's action, some questioned whether demanding Rodney MacDonald resign wasn't a premature and emotional response that would damage any chance of convincing the minister he had made a mistake. After a second meeting a less inflammatory ad was written, circulated, and approved by over 1,000 supporters, including Alistair Macleod, George Eliot Clarke and a virtual "who's who" of the arts, both inside and outside Nova Scotia. The message was clear: reinstate the legislated Nova Scotia Arts Council immediately.

The response to this call was to be repeated dozens of times in the coming weeks without modification or elaboration. The minister indicated that the administrative costs had grown too high in relation to funds allocated to artists (he made varying claims throughout the campaign for reinstatement) and indicated that government would deliver the same programs at savings of up to \$270,000 — savings that he vowed would be put into the pockets of Nova Scotian artists. In addition, he spoke to what he described as

an "inclusive" council that, one might infer, would improve upon the inferior NSAC model.

This new council will be inclusive with representation from artists, cultural organisations, and communities. It will listen to and respond to the needs of the sector and community cultural development.

(The Daily News, 27 April 2002)

The minister also offered this reassurance regarding artistic freedom:

I want to assure Nova Scotians that decisions on artistic merit will be made by peers through the continued use of peer assessment panels ... Individuals will still be able to compete equally for available funds ...

At a glance this all seems very reasonable — a government attempting to make the best of limited resources while maintaining all the principles of impartiality and fairness. More than a cursory look at these arguments, however, reveals how carefully deceptive they really are. Both the economic and developmental arguments for the dismantling of the NSAC fail miserably, pulled under by the weight of false or misleading data and philosophical semantics worthy of Orwell.

The argument that the ratio between administrative costs and funds granted was unacceptable was, without question, true. Council members and staff were very concerned and frustrated with the situation and had repeatedly made the case to government that something could be done. The reasons for the financial predicament, however, lay squarely at the feet of the minister himself, and he knew it. Under his administration the NSAC allocation was cut from 1.5 million to 1.23 million dollars in only three years. In addition, his department dragged its feet in moving the administration of the largest arts organization grants to the council, a move that would have dramatically altered the ratio of administration costs to grants awarded. His claim that his department could administer the same programs for less was not supported by any proposed budget or substantiated in any way, perhaps because this supposed new efficiency had not been calculated in any scientific manner. Peter Sametz, director of operations for the Saskatchewan Arts Board, reacted with these comments:

The Minister has gone on record as saying he finds that spending \$370 000 (including program delivery costs) to deliver 1.2 million in funding is unacceptably high. What the Minister needs to understand is that the problem is not with the \$370 000, it's with the 1.2 million. This is a pitiful level of support for a province of this size.

The reality is that it costs nothing more in administration to deliver double, triple, quadruple the amount of available funding once the jury has done its work! The costs of decision-making are fixed relative to the variable amounts of available funding. I suspect the NSAC could easily deliver 7 million in funding for the same \$370 000 it spends on administration now ...

The Minister is in for a big surprise when he discovers that it will not be possible to magically transform costs of program delivery into grant allocations ... If the Minister contends that departmental staff have the time available to take on these responsibilities, then he fired the wrong people!"

In addition, the minister practiced a clear double standard in evaluating the administrative costs of council. The Save Our Arts Council Coalition pointed out that the minister muddied the waters of the argument by linking program delivery and administration together, and referring to their combined price tag as "administration." In this way, he was able to claim various figures for the costs of council administration, sometimes as high as \$429,000. This calculation is inconsistent with the way the minister calculated administrative costs from his own department, which under the same criteria would contend with a ratio of administration to grants several percentage points higher than the NSAC. If efficiency was the goal, then programs should have been transferred to the council, not the other way around.

In claiming that the principles of the council would continue to be upheld, the government displayed either an ignorance of what these principles were or a canny recognition that the public at large would not be able to sort out the difference between what was and what would be. The arm's-length principle dictates that the principles and criteria under which grants are to be allocated are developed independently of political interference, based on

artistic merit and merit only. What the minister proposed met none of these requirements. The criteria, including geographic considerations, were to be established by his department with input from, among others, undefined citizens who are not members of the professional arts community. By controlling the agenda he controls the flow of funds. While the minister promised to employ peer juries in grants to individuals, he would be appointing these juries and thus, without question, be controlling his new council. Even the most enlightened despot is a despot, and he who appoints, controls. The minister also carefully avoided offering peer juries for grants to organizations, which made up the vast majority of funds granted through the NSAC. In short, the promising façade of benevolence gave way quite quickly to the reality of a governmental power grab. The government's message wasn't working.

The arts community's campaign produced an unprecedented flood of letters to the editor in papers large and small. The *Globe and Mail* headlined its analysis of the government's action with "Smelling a Rat in Nova Scotia." George Eliot Clarke opined that Nova Scotia's arts policy was being "yanked into the Dark Ages." The Nova Scotia Cultural Network made maximum use of the internet as a campaign tool, as it possessed an extensive cultural database of contacts and statistics. Some would argue that without the network and this technology, the cultural community could not have mounted the effective opposition it did. Issuing daily updates including contacts, analysis, and possible strategies for the individual advocate, the NSCN drastically shortened the time necessary to mobilize a united opposition. The campaign, even during the province's budget week, kept the future of the NSAC front and centre in the media for weeks, an achievement in and of itself that was without precedent.

Not every voice opposed the NSAC's demise. Although the vast majority of letters to the editor were outraged with the government's action, several voices from the cultural industries supported it, claiming that industries had been undersupported (which was true) because of an unhealthy and unwarranted focus on professional artists (which was not). Some in the cultural industries smelled money and opportunity in allying themselves with the government on this issue, and some lost a great deal of credibility with their colleagues in the arts sector as a result.

Perhaps the best-known champion of the government's cause was Rob Cohn, a music-industry entrepreneur in Halifax who appeared to feel vindicated and empowered by the demolition of the NSAC. He wrote:

... the Machiavellian way in which the arts sector is pushing emotional buttons reminds me of Nazis use of culture to brainwash "the people."

I object to all of the arts organizations which openly state that the people that take the art from under the artists beds and show it to the world are not as important to the economy as the artists ... artists pretend to speak for the whole sector and they don't ... tell me, you all, why shouldn't I be able to eat as well?

(Excerpts- Letter to the editor, *Mail Star*, 5 April 2002)

Hyperbolic language aside, Mr. Cohn became the counterpoint spokesperson to the SOAC campaign and demonstrated how divisive the government's action would potentially be. By lumping the interests and funding of not-for-profit artistic creation with cultural industries the department effectively turned both partners in cultural development against each other, fighting over who would claim a larger slice of the funding pie. That the NSAC was never designed to address cultural industries seemed lost on the likes of Mr. Cohn — any means were acceptable, including the demolition of the NSAC, so long as some industries' long-neglected priorities were addressed.

After a meeting on the Halifax waterfront on April 5, Leah Hamilton, speaking on behalf of members of the board of the Nova Scotia Arts Council, indicated that the council would not disband.

As its governors, we feel it is our obligation to heed this call (of support) and continue to do our best to support the arts community of this province.

A public organization of volunteers refusing the government's call to disband was indicative of how seriously the government had miscalculated the resolve of the arts community. Ten days after the closure of the council, the issue was front and centre, and the campaign was gaining steam.

In an effort to demonstrate its resolve to carry through with its plan to rewrite the legislation that established the NSAC (one government official termed this legislative manoeuvre "retroactive legalization") the department announced a six-member culture sector team that would advise the minister on the establishment of the new arts and culture council. Of the six members, not a single one represented a professional arts organization that was served by the formal NSAC. One, Linda Carvery, was an unsuccessful Tory candidate in the previous provincial election (as well as an acclaimed professional singer) and Don Ferguson, a former Sydney bar owner who used to hire MacDonald to play fiddle (and present manager of the Savoy Theatre in Glace Bay). Sector team chair Eva Moore's resume issued by the department looks extremely impressive until one understands that her credits are overwhelmingly amateur in nature. Moore has made important contributions to the cultural life of Nova Scotia, but not directly to the professional arts. Why would the minister appoint these people to sit on the team when its resulting composition only reinforced the shift to cultural industries and a return of political patronage?

There appear to be two possible answers. One is that many better qualified candidates were asked and refused on a matter of principle to participate in the dismantling of the NSAC. That some former members of the NSAC were asked and refused to sit is a fact. The second possibility is that the minister could not risk appointing a sector team that did not inherently support his strategy (the resulting fallout would be politically devastating) and so fell back on those who could be trusted not to rock the boat. Some community members who were asked to sit and refused believe that the government was actually attempting to appoint a full twelve member council, but because the refusal rate was so high officials opted to appoint a smaller transition team in the interim. Already, the shadow of political interference cast a pall over every action the minister made.

On April 18 the SOAC coalition staged perhaps the largest political protest of artists that the province has ever seen. Over 650 assembled in front of City Hall in Halifax and endured freezing drizzle as they marched several blocks for a ninety-minute rally on the steps of the Nova Scotia Legislature. Leaders of both opposition parties spoke clearly and promised that they would reinstate the council if elected. Many cultural leaders spoke about their sense of having been betrayed and deceived by their own government. It was a noisy, angry crowd that simply didn't want to leave. The minister responsible for the protest, however, refused to address the crowd. Enduring chants of "Rodney! Rodney! Tell Us Why!" that could be clearly heard inside the legislature, the minister adamantly refused to address the protesters. He later offered this explanation to the press:

I guess you could say I'm not fiddling around — this decision is the right decision for the right reasons and we're not veering from it ... you have to ask yourself, what are the problems?

(excerpted from the *Daily News*, 19 April 2002).

MacDonald stayed with the message that he wanted to put administrative dollars in the hands of artists. The fact that 650 artists were outside the legislature yelling his name in anger didn't seem to faze him. He played the role of misunderstood and benign public servant all too well.

On April 25, the SOAC coalition took out a full-page ad in the *Mail Star* newspaper, demanding, in very strong language, that the minister resign. Citing many reasons, the ad stated that the minister had lost the trust of those he had sworn to serve, and must step aside. The paper that printed the ad informed the coalition that any further ads would need to be submitted three days in advance so that their legal counsel could vet the content. Apparently the ad had angered somebody.



Ken Schwartz, chair of the Save Our Arts Council campaign, addresses the crowd outside the legislative buildings. Photo: Chris O'Neill. Courtesy: Two Planks and a Passion.

The day that the ad ran ATV news, the local CTV affiliate, invited the minister and myself (as the chair of SOAC) to participate in a joint interview about the resignation call and the demand to reinstate the NSAC. While neither of us could actively engage the other in debate due to the format of the program, the minister stayed with his message of administrative savings and studiously avoided answering questions dealing with the methods used to shut down council and the lack of budgetary information that would support his position. It was as close as the minister ever came to facing his detractors, although he wasn't in the same studio as his opposition and wasn't pressed in the slightest to answer questions he chose to avoid. While MacDonald was clearly evasive, he wasn't seriously challenged, either.

The following weeks were taken up by the slow yet inevitable legislative process of hearings and readings of the Financial Measures Act. Clauses 41 to 44 of the Act effectively destroyed the legislated arts council. With a majority in the legislature, the Conservative government was free to do as it pleased. On May 17, the act passed by a vote of 23 to 19; the Nova Scotia Arts Council ceased to exist.

While the campaign to bring arm's-length funding back to Nova Scotia's cultural community will continue, the campaign to Save the Nova Scotia Arts Council has left some vital questions that members of the arts community need to answer if they are to be successful in this quest. Why was an unprecedented campaign of support from the community so completely unsuccessful? Why did the Tory government feel it could utterly disregard the will of the community without paying a political price? Other groups, notably women's shelters, were able to reverse budget cuts to their organizations during the same period through similar tactics and displays of public support — why not the arts community? How do we, as a community, prepare ourselves for the lightning strike of a massive ideological shift within government?

It is clear that Nova Scotia's artists must become more involved in mainstream provincial politics if they are to have any hope of keeping issues like arm's-length funding on the legislative agenda. As in the general population, apathy is rampant when it comes to political action among many who make their living from their art. Artists must join political parties, participate in leadership campaigns and speak from the floor of conventions where policies are

adopted. This recent attack on freedom of expression clearly disproves the cynical maxim held by so many — that all parties are the same and a single vote doesn't matter. Even in mainstream politics policy differences between potential leaders can make a vast difference to our day-to-day lives, and without a constant finger on the pulse of all governments (and governments-in-waiting) it is impossible to assess and influence public policy vis-à-vis the cultural sector. Culture employs more workers than forestry, the fishery, mining and agriculture sectors combined in Nova Scotia today. It's time for culture to take its seat at the table.

The Conservative Party of Nova Scotia is a prime example of this present lack of participation. Sitting Conservatives candidly told SOAC campaign members that their ire meant nothing to the minister or the premier because "you folks don't vote for us anyway, so what difference does it make?" If the issue could have swung a significant number of Conservative voters come the next election (as the women's shelter cuts most certainly could have) then the campaign would have had a chance. As it was, the thousands who wrote, called or marched were viewed as being of an alien constituency. This is both the reality of a first-past-the-post electoral system and a reflection on how pathetically low the status of the artist is in Nova Scotian society, especially in rural areas where the Tories find their power base.

Those of us involved in the SOAC campaign discovered very quickly that the concept of arm's-length funding is extremely difficult to articulate in a thirty-second sound bite, which made it a formidable task to champion its cause. Compounding this problem (and, perhaps, capitalizing on it) the government continually confused peer assessment (the evaluation of an application by a jury of peers) and arm's-length funding (making policy, creating criteria, managing budgets and selecting jurors without government interference). Even many artists who directly or indirectly benefited from NSAC grants were confused as to exactly what was at stake. The arts community must undertake a long-term commitment to articulate the importance of this concept to the development of artistic excellence, beginning with artists of all disciplines followed by consumers of art and the public as a whole.

Prior to March 27 few could imagine such an assault on this important principle. A chief exception to this disbelief could be found



After the Rally. Photo: Chris O'Neill. Courtesy: Two Planks and a Passion.

with many recent immigrants from around the globe who have learned not to take any basic freedom for granted. An employee at the writer's federation of Nova Scotia who grew up in Eastern Europe remarked that the closure of the NSAC reminded her of home. Complacency can easily be found in this land of relative plenty, and complacency is exactly the way communities will lose important rights and freedoms. By the time Nova Scotia artists realized they had a fight on their hands, the fight was over. We must, as artists and citizens, establish priorities and protect our interests.

The future of this campaign, as of June 2002, is uncertain. The New Democratic Party of Darrell Dexter, currently in opposition in the house, recently passed a unanimous motion at the annual convention to reinstate the Nova Scotia Arts Council if elected. The Nova Scotia Cultural Network, strapped for cash and seeking assistance from the minister of culture, notified the SOAC campaign that they would no longer participate actively in the campaign. The official reason for this sudden reversal has yet to be articulated, and the decision was taken while the network's executive director was on leave in China. Exiled members of the Nova Scotia Arts Council are to meet at the end of June to discuss further action. Members of the cultural community are rolling up their sleeves and preparing to write proposals to the new Nova Scotia Arts and Culture Council, as they must. At the time of writing, program details were not yet available.

The demolition of the fledgling NSAC is truly a double-edged sword that embodies significant loss and, for those who chose to recognize it, an important opportunity. That the government so successfully killed the NSAC and brought arts funding under political control

will not go unnoticed by right-of-centre governments across Canada who are looking for money to cut deficits. Nova Scotians were the first to lose their council, but it would be foolishly naïve to assume they will be the last. Unless the SOAC campaign can demonstrate its electoral muscle in the next eighteen months, it will be clear to John Hamm's conservative-minded colleagues that cutting an arts council carries with it an affordable price tag. The opportunity is brief and not unique to the plight of artists. The NSAC's fate is exactly the wake-up call that the cultural community needed to motivate its members to involve themselves in their governments, their political parties, and their wider communities. In an era of dwindling public resources and the crushing force of globalization on cultural development, Nova Scotia's artists have learned a powerful lesson on the perils of political cynicism and indifference. How they choose to use the experience is a work-in-progress.

When asked about the relationship between governments and freedom of speech, Salman Rushdie said: "What is freedom of expression? Without the freedom to offend, it ceases to exist." Nova Scotia's arts community has glimpsed the thin edge of the wedge that would bring publicly funded artistic endeavours under political control. What happens next matters to everyone.

Ken Schwartz is Artistic Director of Two Planks and a Passion Theatre Company, program director for the Ross Creek Centre for the Arts, a former member of the Nova Scotia Arts Council and chair of the Save Our Arts Council Campaign. He is a director, dramaturg, and playwright who co-wrote Westray: The Long Way Home (Blizzard Publishing) with Chris O'Neill. He lives in Canning, Nova Scotia, with his wife, three children and menagerie of animals.

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Selling Out? Who's Buying It?

A FUSE roundtable on funding the arts.

feature

Is the future of arts funding a "new Left" or "third way" blend of public and private partnerships? Is it old fashioned to ethically privilege public over private funding? How do you sell out if nobody's buying? What follows is a cordial but impassioned debate about these very questions. The result falls well short of consensus.

FUSE has invited four arts workers from across the country, each directly immersed in the day-to-day struggle of keeping their projects and organizations afloat. Each brings a distinct perspective to the circumstances they find on the ground in their communities and all wrestle with the ethical complexities of adapting noble principles to a world increasingly ruled by capital. Richard William Hill from FUSE chimes in occasionally to stir the pot. Kim Simon started things rolling on behalf of the FUSE editorial committee.

Kim Simon: How is your own cultural community negotiating access to both private and public funding? Are these distinctions even meaningful for you? Are the forms of funding that people are getting directing production or limiting it?

Chris Lloyd: I'm an artist and the Administrative Director of the Khyber Centre for the Arts, an artist-run centre in Halifax. The Khyber project was intended to be a primarily self-funded organization that would generate revenue by operating a licensed club. This endeavour fell short of covering the costs associated with the project and a well-timed application to the Canada Council resulted in an annual operating grant when oo gallery [a now defunct Halifax artist-run centre] elected not to apply for its annual funding. For the past six years this has been the main source of public funding the Khyber receives, and is one fifth of our operating budget. Additional revenues come from sub-tenancies, fund-raising and short-term rentals.

The Khyber is leaning toward acquiring further public rather than private funding. In our short history it has proved difficult to receive funding from private sources, though in-kind donations and volunteer labour have been easier to achieve. The distinction between the two sources of funding is quite important. Private funding tends to imply the existence of some sort of commercial exchange, whereas public funding still retains an aura of "greater good."

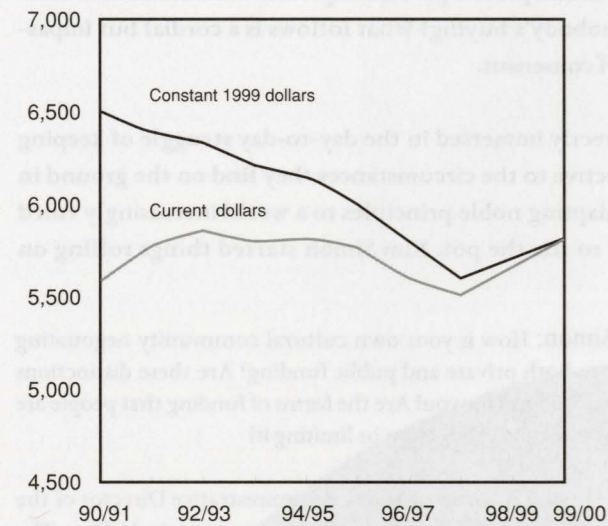
Sally McKay: I'm an artist, writer and co-owner and operator (in collaboration with Catherine Osborne) of the Toronto art magazine Lola. I recently co-edited the YYZ book, *Money, Value, Art: State Funding, Free Markets, Big Pictures*, with Andrew J. Paterson.

round
table

CENTRE DE DOCUMENTATION
ARTEXTE
DOCUMENTATION CENTRE

Total government expenditures on culture

Millions of dollars



Source: Stats Canada
See caption below.

Here's the dichotomy I work within on a daily basis: Lola's revenue is primarily advertising. This business strategy has partly developed out of necessity. Up until recently the fact that we are free in Toronto has rendered us ineligible for operational government grants. The Canada Council has changed their criteria this year, allowing us to demonstrate a committed readership by other means.

Being free is integral to the accessibility and fresh irreverence of Lola, and we were never interested in sacrificing this integral element in order to meet the Council's criteria. Instead we have been working on a business model, and trying our best to succeed as a for-profit Canadian contemporary art magazine. By for-profit I do not mean that our goal is to get rich, but simply to pay ourselves a living wage, perhaps rent an office and give our magazine a chance to develop to its full potential.

At the same time that we are now eligible for Canada Council funding, we are also hiring a publisher and undertaking a much more sophisticated and plausible marketing strategy. In short, I

guess, we want it all. Historically in this country, cultural endeavours have been synonymous with non-profit endeavours. We have bumped up against this assumption many times. But I know Lola is not alone among cultural organizations in favouring a variety of revenue streams. Diversify!

Gary Varro: I'm artistic director and curator of Queer City Cinema, a biannual lesbian and gay film and video festival based in Regina. I'm also a designer, visual artist and an art director in the field of film production.

Eighty to ninety percent of Queer City Cinema's budget comes from public funding through granting agencies — federally, provincially and municipally. I believe that as traditionally "minoritized" communities, lesbian and gay organizations can use their history and reality (still so applicable here in Saskatchewan) as a reason and strategy for acquiring funds for queer events such as Queer City Cinema. For instance, the Canada Council (the media arts section anyway) prioritizes funding for specific marginalized groups, although of course award decisions are based on the artistic scope and integrity of the overall project. Still, if I were to submit an application for an underground film festival (something I have considered doing) the success of that grant application may be compromised because even though it may include queer work, the arguments that could be used for doing such a festival here in Saskatchewan would be less convincing than those for a queer festival. So, I continue to do a so-called "lesbian and gay film festival" even though I do include a lot of experimental, non-narrative, non-identifiably queer work. Promoting the artistic aspect of the festival is just as important to the organization as promoting the festival as a queer event. To some the former makes the festival that much more queer because more and more of that kind of work situates itself outside the mainstreaming of queerness as illustrated by the proliferation of feature-length phlegm, and access to queer viewing on TV.

Private or corporate funding is difficult to acquire for openly queer events here because there is still a level of apprehension with sponsoring such events in a community not quite used to a queer film festival, or queerness in general. Of course, in larger centres like Toronto, the appearance and involvement of corporations in queer

festival is common, signifying a whole different mentality when it comes to sexual orientation issues and events that celebrate and promote difference. Pride events are a good example of just how mainstream "lesbian and gay" has become. It all comes down to demographics and making money. Many national corporations don't consider Saskatchewan a place to market themselves to dykes and fags, because even though we may be here and we may be queer, there just ain't enough of us to get used to, and not enough of us to create a consumer community. That reality is also frustrating because, although a corporation's decision to make an appearance is based on marketing and ultimately money, their presence here at the festival can be interpreted as an important and validating gesture, showing the challenged queer communities

City's special programming (artist talks, panel discussions and screenings) has always been based on what we see at festivals, asking what trends, voices and visions are getting made heard and seen. Unconsciously, with regards to funding applications and formulating the next round of programs for the festival in 2002, there may have been toning down of some things and some cozying up of others. However, I am unsure about this. If so, it was obviously to assure that Queer City Cinema received funds and to avoid the possibility of scaring the jury into not funding another potentially "controversial" grant, and having to defend it once more to the angry mobs of politicians and the public. In the end, all grants were successful, almost doubling figures from the previous festival.

Joséphine Mills: I have been the director and curator of the art Gallery and assistant professor in the over a year. This new position has given me insight in issues related to arts funding. I respect the perspective from managing a public art program ways to build the collection, fund exhibitions and now working to build a new art space.

I don't really like going into a battle. I haven't lived just learning the ropes of the system here. What goes into the Alberta Foundation for the Arts venue comes exclusively from lottery. The AFA gives core funding to various arts galleries, but ever, they made a change that "institutions (which are part of universities and colleges) will be cut off. The date has been bumped back seven years. We have two more years. After this, we will have a brand new program with project grants. Moving from core funding to project grants is a step backward as I will now spend much more time on specific projects and then hang all that specific project or projects. It seems that other, (lottery) funding in Alberta is being such small amounts, that organizations are pursuing this option.

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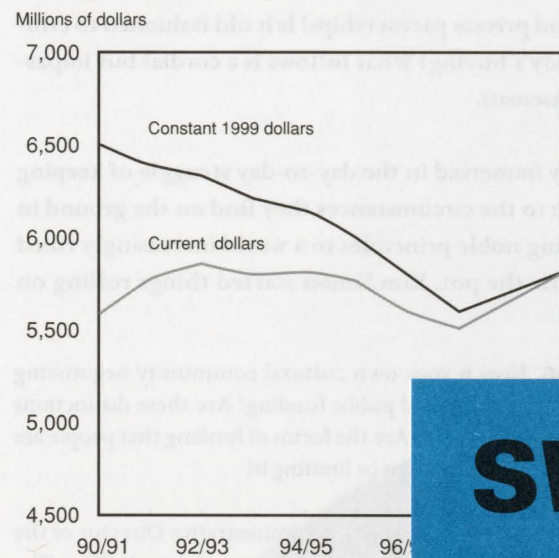
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According to Statistics Canada, total government spending on culture close to those at the beginning of the 1990s. However, a closer look at the figures reveal that, when expressed in constant dollar terms, government spending on culture, at all three levels, has in fact declined over the last decade, from a high of \$6.490 billion in 1990/91 down to \$5.869 billion in 1999/2000 — a decrease of 9%. (Source: CCA Bulletin 19/02)

Percent of artists who are women. Compare this to 45% in the general labour force. Significantly, women account for only 36% of the "producers, directors, choreographers, and related occupations" category. (Source: CHRC)

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Two years ago Queer City Cinema, and more specifically its funding agencies, were taken to task for funding provided to the festival. Responding to Canada Council grant guidelines that encouraged projects to be risk taking, Queer City Cinema was awarded several grants that assisted the presentation of one portion of its programming that focused on the relationship between pornography and community. Eventually dubbed the queer porn festival by politicians and right-wing Christian groups, the debate persisted around arm's-length funding, taxpayers' dollars and the corruption of society for weeks in the Saskatchewan legislature and later in the House of Commons.

Some funding agencies were caught off guard, scrambled a little, and eventually came to defend the festival and the peer jury system. Others willingly took the opportunity to help educate the public about the free society we live in, the fact that art has always been controversial, and that freedom of expression is a right. I actually think that they appreciated this in-the-hot-seat moment to defend the existence of art, culture, diversity and, most importantly, that tax dollars are a collective form of expression and not everyone is going to agree as to how these funds are dispersed.

Post-controversy, Queer City Cinema was left with a luxurious amount of infamy and expectation: would the next festival continue to annoy, embarrass and expose the homophobic backlash? Could Queer City Cinema in fact, get any funding at all? Queer

City's special programming (artist talks, panel discussions and screenings) has always been based on what we see at festivals, asking what trends, voices and visions are getting made heard and seen. Unconsciously, with regards to funding applications and formulating the next round of programs for the festival in 2002, there may have been toning down of some things and some cozying up of others. However, I am unsure about this. If so, it was obviously to assure that Queer City Cinema received funds and to avoid the possibility of scaring the jury into not funding another potentially "controversial" grant, and having to defend it once more to the angry mobs of politicians and the public. In the end, all grants were successful, almost doubling figures from the previous festival.

Josephine Mills: I have been the director and curator of the University of Lethbridge Art Gallery and assistant professor in the department of art for just over a year. This new position has given me an even stronger investment in issues related to arts funding. I have developed a new perspective from managing a public art gallery and needing to find ways to build the collection, fund exhibitions and publications, and now working to build a new art gallery building on campus.

Obtaining funds is increasingly like going into a battle. I haven't lived in Alberta before, so I am just learning the ropes of the system here. There is no public money that goes into the Alberta Foundation for the Arts (AFA). Their revenue comes exclusively from lottery money. Currently, the AFA gives core funding to various arts galleries and museums. However, they made a change that "institutional galleries" (those that are part of universities and colleges) will have that core funding cut off. The date has been bumped back several times, but it looks like we have two more years. After this, we will be able to apply under a brand new program with project grants for post-secondary institutions. Moving from core funding to project funding is a big step backward as I will now spend much more time on the grant proposal for specific projects and then hang all our AFA funding hopes on that specific project or projects. It seems that obtaining public (or, rather, lottery) funding in Alberta is being made so difficult, and for such small amounts, that organizations will not want to continue pursuing this option.

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Percent of artists who are women. Compare this to 45% in the general labour force. Significantly, women account for only 36% of the "producers, directors, choreographers, and related occupations" category. (Source: CHR0)

arm's-length funding led to this emphasis and thus to a sharp opposition between either public funds and private funds or between generating revenue and obtaining public funds. Prior to the establishment of the parallel gallery grants at the Canada Council, various types of artist-run groups existed in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In Saskatoon, the fore-runner of A.K.A. artist-run centre was the Shoestring Gallery. This organization included people working in craft as well as conceptual work. They formed a group to have both an exhibition space and a space to sell work. Once the parallel-gallery funding program was established, organizations needed to remove revenue aspects — members selling their work — in order to obtain funding. This did significantly direct the formation of artist-run centres in our country and it did work against diversity.

Sally McKay: I like what you said, Josephine, that the history of arm's-length funding has led to a polarization between government funding and "free market" funding. It makes me question something you said, Chris: "Private funding tends to imply the existence of some sort of commercial exchange, whereby public funding still retains an aura of 'greater good.'" I wonder how everyone feels about this very question. Personally, I agree that this perception is still out there, but I also feel it is becoming quite old-fashioned.

The aspect of Gary's posting that sticks out for me is the strange dichotomy between the fact that explicit "identity" projects are more likely to get government funds, while at the same time, garnering private sponsors seems to have more political impact.

I think there are two sides to this coin. On one side, we see cultural activity sparking energy off in all kinds of new directions. In the past few years we've seen a plethora of one-night, art-show dance-parties. At the same time we've seen a bunch of small, energetic commercial galleries open up; definitely a lot more raw than the Yorkville [an affluent gallery district in Toronto] set — plucky and game for adventure. On the other side of the coin, we have the corporatization of culture as an encroaching ethos. Do we, as a society, maybe have more tolerance for mixing up our art with commerce than we used to, because we are getting more used to the all-pervasive right-wing agenda of governments?

Chris Lloyd: I would like to respond to some of the points Josephine and Sally made. First off, about how obtaining funds is

similar to going into battle. I think this is a good analogy. As I've said, the amount of core funding Khyber gets from Canada Council is about one-fifth of our overall budget. It appears next to impossible for smaller and younger organizations like ours to get a larger piece of the pie. Ideally, the result should be an increase in operating funds — but there seems to be little chance of that, given what most Atlantic-region artist-run centres receive in Canada Council funding. Regional disparity is a real problem here.

We rely on project funding to augment many of our programs and exhibitions. The problem is: what happens when you don't get the project grant? And a larger problem for us: recently the Nova Scotia government shut down the legitimate provincial arm's-length arts-funding agency, which launched a great many of us literally into battle. Unfortunately, with the house stacked against us the legislation passed and we are now faced with the prospect of applying to the replacement council, which is now a sub-section of the ministry of tourism and culture, and has an unclear mandate. I believe that after an initial "honeymoon" period — where the replacement arts and culture council may be generous and try to make peace with the hundreds of pissed-off artists and arts organizations — project funding will be harder and harder to access.

So the battle plans seem to go as follows: take up the fight for increased public funding, or pursue private endeavours. It is hard and exhaustive to do both. My comments about "the greater good" may be a bit old-fashioned, but I think that is where the divide is located. Hip one-night art shows/dance events are great, and there have been plenty of those held at the Khyber. Cultural communities are certainly more willing to "mix it up," especially as government policies lean more to the right. I think a divide is located along the lines of commercialism, and have more to do with commodification and a further co-opting of cultural practices to force us all to live strictly by market forces. It's great if commercial galleries can support emerging talent and develop a healthy Canadian patronage, but I think forcing artists to pay for spaces to show their work is a potentially risky move. What happens to the right to make non-commercial work, work that is explorative or transgressive or even hostile toward commercial interests? Doesn't the pay-to-show position give precedence toward those with greater economic means? Is this a two-tier art system where priority is given to artists that can afford to rent the cool spaces?

Josephine Mills: I appreciate Chris' comments and want to add to this. The amount of effort to gain public funding, for such small results, and the subsequent opposition that occurs between groups applying for the same pot concerns me. As I said and Chris echoes, one ends up struggling for funds that often don't come through. I'm interested in discussing strategies to step away from this struggle, look at the bigger picture and try out some options to create change. Often the history of justifying arm's-length funding is overlooked. It arose during a specific period in liberal democracies — along with public health, schools, etc. The discourses that enabled government to empower professionals to act at arm's-length have shifted and so health care, arts, etc are all under attack. It is clear that the arguments to support governments acting in the public good have shifted and these arguments are not as effective. Instead we have the discourse of taxpayers and of running our galleries, lives and everything else "like a business." I'm not saying we should just give up. I think the strong polarization of private and public funding can hold us back from developing new strategies. Both the notions of public and of private funding need to be explored. I am certainly not willing to concede that private funding automatically means buying into a far right agenda and running the U of L gallery and my own life "like a business." Arts professionals are enormously hard-working, passionate and creative. If we managed to get a powerful funding system at one point, can't we adapt and develop another now? One strategy I am trying to follow in order to support the notion of public funding is to emphasize public access and diversity. This is in response to much of the attacks on public funding which claim that only a narrow range of "special interests" are served by public institutions. Gallery programming can play a kind of proactive lobbying role — one can run different types of programming that reach various audiences. Taken as a whole, one reaches a broader audience, but each exhibition or event doesn't need to.

Sally McKay: Loving this discussion!

I want to make my position perfectly clear. I think government funding for the arts is a GOOD THING. But I also think the ethos of government funding bodies is outdated. For instance: the Canada Council was established as a means of bolstering Canadian national identity. It is no wonder then, that Gary runs into the issues he does, where what gets recognized is identity politics. That pigeon-hole has a value, don't get me wrong, but we all know there is

much more to culture than nationality or ethnicity. The good old Peter Gzowski-esque liberalism (we're-all-here-in-the-same-boat-full-of-backyard-housewife-writers-and-wacky-Quebeckers) no longer reflects the cultural momentum of this nation.

I acknowledge that I am in dangerous territory here. In 1998, Hal Jackman tried to update this system by bringing private, corporate interest into the arm's-length jury process at the Ontario Arts Council. YIKES! A very scary development for sure, and yet more evidence to support Chris's fears of losing support for work that is "explorative or transgressive or even hostile towards commercial interests." A funding body that will leave content alone is something to protect and champion. However, I feel very strongly that the precarious nature of our government funding should not prevent us from trying to make it more relevant to contemporary Canadian cultural practice.

I also feel that we have a problem of definition when we raise the spectre of "free market." Government funding is a very specific, discernible system. Every other means of achieving revenue falls under the umbrella of "free market." We need to break that up a bit; not all private interests are corporate, not all sponsorships are invested in content, not all artists who sell their work are compromising their explorative edge, and not all businesses compromise their own integrity in order to make a buck. The task at hand is much more complex than picking one system over the other. Artists and arts organizations are in the position of navigating fairly murky ethical waters, finding money where they can, and staying vigilant about their own integrity and the integrity of their work.

Richard Hill: Sally, I'm concerned about the way in which you've conflated the nation-building agenda of the early Canada Council with queer and "ethnic" identity politics (I won't even mention the Gzowski-esque liberalism!). A lot of us fought like hell against the liberal "nation builders" to make genuine space for ourselves and in many cases (despite how it may look) our inclusion often still feels tenuous and superficial (I'm speaking from my experience as an Aboriginal person here, but I'm sure others might feel the same way). I hope that the generation of young artists that you support don't have to fight as hard to find a place for what they do, but I also hope that what they do builds on what has gone before rather than simply overturns it. The journey from edgy hippness to old

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Percentage of cultural workers employed part-time in 1997. Compare this to 19% of the total labour force. (source: CHR)

Percentage increase in cultural workers in the 1990s (i.e., 578,000 in 1999). Three quarters of this increase was attributable to self-employment. The overall labour force, on the other hand, only increased by 11%. (source: CHR)

round
table

round
table

guard can be a short trip when the art market requires a kind of eternal adolescence, rather than creating spaces for ideas to grow up in. A case in point might be Lola itself. I'm sure you're aware that Lola is already on its way to becoming an institution in its own right. When that happens you enter a new world of public expectation. I'll watch with interest how you manage that transition.

Sally McKay: Richard, all my friends will agree that I am an inveterate blow hard. I certainly mean no disrespect to those who fought (and fight) for arm's-length arts funding. My position comes from a desire to take the funding as it exists and build onto it. My frustration comes from the fact that this funding is in such constant jeopardy that to even talk about the value of other forms of revenue is sometimes taken as a threat to the status quo. We are all scrabbling for pieces of such a tiny pie!

I do want to quickly respond to your comment about Lola's growth. The magazine is run on a passionate desire to express the wider relevance of art beyond the edges of the art community. I believe this goal is evident in the content of Lola and will continue to be evident as we grow into the institution we have become, regardless of our funding model.

Kim Simon: Are there ideals around funding that each of you hold yourselves to? What are your own ethical limits? Sally talked about making government funding more relevant to contemporary practice. What would this kind of funding look like? To your minds, are there models for funding in the world (or your utopian imagination) that could work?

Chris Lloyd: Asking about ethical limits surrounding arts funding is a funny question — to me it sort of sounds like asking whether or not artists should accept "blood money." To put it into perspective I'll use an extreme example. If you believe the whole darn system is tainted and you want to be truly ethical, would you accept money from either government or private industry? But in real terms, I think artists are in the position that so little money seems to find its way to us we're happy with it regardless where it comes from. After all, what's more important is what you do with it.

Sally made some good points about private funding. It is true, government funding is fairly easy to pin down, yet private funding

exists in so many other ways, from various-sized corporate sponsorships to private foundations that have differing and sometimes oddly specific mandates. Some may have questionable ethics, but we've never really been put in a situation where we would have to make that call: Nike has never asked to sponsor a line of Khyber clothes. Would it compromise the integrity of an artist-run centre like the Khyber to accept a million-dollar sponsorship deal from Absolut Vodka? Probably not. We'd laugh all the way to the bank. But that isn't the situation we find ourselves in.

We find ourselves in a situation where a provincial government shows no interest in supporting contemporary culture outside of industries like film, theatre, music or, the big one, tourism. If you can't count a big box office then you don't matter. Our premier stated publicly a few days ago that he was worried that if too much growth occurred in Nova Scotia it could lead to too much "outside influence." It's no wonder all the young artists are leaving.

It's hard for me to switch gears and think about utopian funding now. Maybe, somehow, a funding system that looks at the larger picture, that understands contemporary culture, that awards funding based on an honest, qualified interpretation of a particular organization's approach to programming. Ideally artists need to learn how to interact more positively and constructively with government and business — that sort of thing that isn't really brought up a lot in art schools; it should be. Artists should be able to sell their work, but ideally they would be able to sell the work they want to make, not make work they know will sell. It means having patrons who invest in artists and culture as opposed to investors banking on the potential success of artists. Like Sally said, it's complex, and not easily reduced into binary oppositions.

Josephine Mills: I agree with Chris that focusing on ethical limits for funding is a tricky question. Partly it would be slippery to define what was meant by ethics: for the religious right, funding Queer City Cinema is unethical, whereas for artist-run centres, accepting funding from Nike, as Chris says, could be the unethical route. Too strong a polarization has been made between public and private funding and the belief that some types of funding are inherently better than others. Beginning with this assumption prevents analysis of the complexity of current arts funding. Because I began my career during the erosion of public funding, I often find that I have

a different perspective than people who developed their careers during the expectation of strong public funding. In fact, as a lesbian and a feminist, I had a certain freedom. Given that there was no guaranteed route to obtaining public funding or publicly funded employment in the arts I could follow what I believed in and what interested me. I could be out about my point of view because there was very little to lose. I hope that the instigators of right-wing assaults on the arts would be disappointed at this unforeseen result of their reduction in public funding! While I agree with the strengths of public funding and funding in the interest of public good, I am also willing to say that this system wasn't perfect, even if that is seen as a sacrilegious statement by some.

Kim Simon: It is exactly because I agree that we can no longer draw lines between government funding as good and all the possible forms of "private" money as bad that I wonder if people have considered their own ethical limits (assuming also a common desire for social justice). Perhaps the answer will stand simply at no, we get money where we can ... but I was wondering if any of you have a sense of a new "left" thinking about conscientiously finding multiple sources of funding, dealing with foundations, corporations, collectors, and so on. Or are you saying that trying to predetermine a possible ethics here is naïve or not strategic enough?

Sally McKay: YES, I think we are witnessing a turning over of old-guard to new-guard leftist politics and it's quite exciting. Personally, I do feel ethically engaged (as, I expect, does everyone else here) in this discourse. As an artist whose work is both disposable and fleeting, I need to find sources of funding for my practice other than selling the work itself. Sometimes this funding takes the form of grant money, sometimes it comes from elsewhere. For example, as a bike and transit activist, I insist that Lola not seek out car companies as advertisers. I don't feel ready to pose utopias, because I think this discussion is in its infancy. We have not yet excised the false polarity of government-versus-market. The question of how the left can become more relevant is much, much bigger than the art community (look at pressures on the NDP, for example). There are a lot of us struggling to picture what a future free from corporate rule might look like.

I see it as a very positive sign that the Canada Council has demonstrated the flexibility to adjust their criteria, so that a magazine like

Lola is now eligible. We WANT and NEED grant money to properly run our magazine. But the situation is certainly still precarious, and depends on one thing and one thing only: enough money to go around. Historically (and recently) the Liberals have been supportive. I have a nasty spidey-sense, however, that soon enough we may find ourselves fighting for the very existence of the Canada Council itself. Should this bad thing happen, I will be there with bells on.

Richard Hill: Josephine, I'm taken aback a bit by your hesitancy to engage the question of ethics. You seem to be arriving at a kind of ethical nihilism via relativism; that is, saying that there are a variety of incommensurable ethical positions, that we have no clear way to choose which position to adopt, therefore let's not talk about ethics. The problem is that however complex the world is and how pragmatic we have to be, we do have to make decisions. These decisions are always motivated by values and therefore they are ethical decisions. To me ethics is about two things: determining values and finding the most effective strategy to implement those values amidst the complexity of the world. The danger is mistaking a pragmatic strategy for achieving a particular end (read: value) as an end in itself. For example many large public arts institutions have developed a discourse celebrating private or corporate sponsorship as a good in itself, as the development of beautiful relationships. These strategies may be pragmatically necessary, but I think they are not ideal. They give the rich folks the run of the institutions, while the public still pays via tax breaks for donors, but with significantly less input than if they paid the bills up front. To me this is a warning of how ultimately corrosive seemingly innocent public/private partnerships can become, how plutocratic the results can ultimately be. The first time you get their money you might laugh all the way to the bank, but once you start depending on it you will find there are plenty of strings attached. For me then the role of public funding, however problematic in itself and however pragmatically we must behave to actually promote what we value, remains a more desirable, if not always available option.

Josephine Mills: On the issue of ethics, partly I was playing a role to generate discussion and partly I was responding to my experience of discussions of arts funding when the issue of ethics comes up. I in no way think that ethical questions should be off the table. My point was that in my experience recently, once this line of dis-

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cussion is started, then the discussion becomes narrow and the assumptions overwhelm the ability to produce new strategies and lines of approach. This is not an inherent quality of discussing ethics, but rather a comment on the state of recent funding conversations I've had. My closing point is that I do believe in the need for public funding and funding in the interest of public good. I am deeply concerned about how we will argue for the relevance of this funding when there have been so many discursive and social changes. Being able to actually discuss positions and ideas is crucial for creating the strategies that could maintain the diversity of funding options in this country.

Richard Hill: One last response to Sally's last post. I'm not quite convinced that government vs. market is a false polarity. I'm not sure that unraveling a few threads at the edge of a given polarity utterly undoes the entire tapestry. The polarity may be a crude distinction that hides some grey areas, but we shouldn't let the existence of grey areas hide the fact that in some cases the distinction can be quite real and acute. I do agree that we need to make our distinctions clearer. Obviously the kind of sub-economic activity that has always surrounded the art world beyond public funding (all the volunteer labour, co-operatives, and even the small mostly not-for-profit organizations) is one thing and the for-profit sector quite another. But when you start down the slippery slope toward making profit the key motive, then all bets are off (perhaps the difference between Sally and I is that I see that slope getting steep and slippery almost from the get go). Back in the seventies the conservative economist Milton Friedman argued that: "the Moral Responsibility of Business is to Increase Its Profits." I happen to agree. The idea of socially responsible corporations is a ruse to make us think public intervention is unnecessary. Unlike Friedman, I think the implication of his argument is that we then need to watch these bastards like a hawk and find whatever means possible to regulate them and channel their activities and profits for "the greater good."

Take the example of corporations sponsoring queer film festivals. Why does this make us happy? Because it signals that society in general has changed enough to make it acceptable for those corporations to publicly and explicitly go after a queer market. This isn't motivated by progressive politics on the part of corporations, it's motivated by greed. The positive social effects are an accidental

byproduct only. On the other hand (yes, I'm rebuilding the polarity a bit here) we have public funding. The only legitimate motivation for public funding can be to support a "greater good" that is not supported (or not entirely supported) by the market. If the public system strays from this at times or becomes too directly an organ of state policy, then it is our responsibility to fix it up into the best shape we can. This doesn't mean that the for-profit market can't accidentally produce good things, but let's not forget that they are accidents. I feel good about supporting public funding. And genuine for-profit ventures or partnerships? I don't owe them anything, even when they produce something good, because they never have my interests at heart.

Chris Lloyd: For the sake of argument, I still think a polarity exists between public and private funding, regardless of the myriad forms and blurred distinctions on both sides. The most apparent difference between the two can be found in the way one defines the art an institution produces or presents. With government funding this is accomplished through various grants awarded by peers based on artistic merit. In preparing grants the focus is to demonstrate the artistic quality of the projects. Trying to secure private funding is a little bit different, and comes down to somehow selling the artistic excellence, packaging it, wrapping it up with things like demographics, audience numbers, relevance to particular sponsors own goals, etc. Like Richard says, I think it is a slippery slope, and already a very steep one, yet also completely unavoidable. Tied up in public funding is the increasingly prevalent assumption that additional funds must come from private sources. So the private sector becomes more pervasive, just as the gradual leaning to the right in terms of government fiscal policy is more and more pervasive. Are we approaching a time when nobody will even bat an eyelid when it is decreed that all our social programs will have to pay for themselves and make a profit to boot? Is it all about ensuring that those in the upper income brackets get big tax breaks?

Attempting to change public policy is difficult; fighting to save certain policies, especially when they pertain to the arts, is damn near impossible. My own experience with the government processes and procedures during the dismantling of the Nova Scotia Arts Council drove that fact home. It was disheartening to witness how autocratic and underhanded a governing body can be when it

wants to change policy. It also raised questions for me regarding audience and the development of an arts-educated public. During the media campaign to try to save the Nova Scotia Arts council it became quite obvious that many people didn't know the difference between an arm's-length and a government-department arts council. Many artists themselves were unaware. This tells me that the principles and values underlying this sort of public funding are not advocated enough within the public realm; why would they be, when most mass media is inherently biased toward consumerism and the right? The public's lack of a general, well-rounded education that includes the arts simply makes it easier for a society to drift further to the right, and effortlessly forget public funding entirely.

Not to end on such a pessimistic note, there are currently lots of great opportunities around. I am hopeful that there are many smaller, independent businesses and organizations that honestly want to support the arts and take up the slack left by funding cuts. There will always be deeply committed and passionate people to argue on behalf of the arts. The older public frameworks shouldn't be discarded because they may be outmoded, they can be used as a guide in developing better policy. We just need to find the time and resources to work on better advocacy, public education and policy development. Maybe more discussions of this nature can help in some way.

Gary Varro: What seems to have garnered the most (and most interesting) discussion and unresolved opinion, is this question of ethics. I suppose this is not surprising. As artists and art organizations, our access to public funding is and has been limited, threatened and even removed (a big part of why we're talking about it here) and the collective nod of support we all would like to receive for what we do is compromised by ignorance and a lack of knowledge about public funding by the general population.

So, going after corporate funding, the more ethically questionable route to surviving in the arts is completely understandable, even forced upon us and in the end absolutely necessary. We may be conflicted by doing so — befriending big business may seem incongruous with the more virtuous pursuits of artists — but as Chris pointed out, what you do with it is more important than where it comes from.

Also, corporate funding, if it exists, at least in the case of queer events, can be safer than relying on public funds. As I have experienced first hand, receiving public funds can result in sensationalistic journalism, public protests, debate and a lot of attention. No one can really plan for or predict this sort of politically and socially charged scenario. What's good about it is that it gets people talking, engaged and hopefully a bit more informed about the processes involved in the allocation of their tax dollars to the arts and artists, and ultimately the value of both in the bigger scheme of things.

More than ever, as artists we must be vigilantly aware and ready to think twice about where we take our money from. Ethics and the discussion around goodness, kindness and fairness should be part of how thinking, socially conscious artists position themselves in the real world. Money is such a difficult area for the arts community to engage in because we never got into this "business" with the idea of making money.

I realize that the "real" world often equates money with success and to some extent value and respect, and that is why I believe that to begin the process whereby arts organizations can access more funding in the future, both public and private, we need to address the idea of the artist as professional, rethinking and reworking the artist fee system as it exists. As I recently said to an artist after they informed me that a certain film festival didn't pay them an artist fee (and thanked Queer City for doing so) "if it wasn't for the artists, there wouldn't be a festival," and further to that, no arts organizations, no funding agencies, and so on. Perhaps we take it for granted that this work (for example, the huge number of queer films and videos being produced) will always exist. We need to start the process of changing how we perceive artists by acknowledging their (perhaps immeasurable) contribution through the allocation of better "wages," fees and increased benefits.

Perhaps, as I struggle to make a suggestion (from my utopian imagination) for a better tomorrow, what comes to mind is a movement toward an awareness and demystification of public funding. We need to reverse the perception of art as an unnecessary frill and a bourgeois endeavour. We are committed, hard-working and deserve to be rewarded monetarily for our efforts, and it is up to us (who else?) to continue to push that reality and desire forward.

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The number of artists in Canada in 1991. Artists are the fastest growing occupation category in the labour force. (source: CHR)

Average annual income for artists in 1996. (source: CARO)

7.2

Percentage of artists who are visible minorities as of 1996. The percentage of the population as a whole is 11.2%. (source: CHR)

0.6

Percentage of total federal cultural expenditures allocated to the visual arts in 1997/8. (source: CARO)

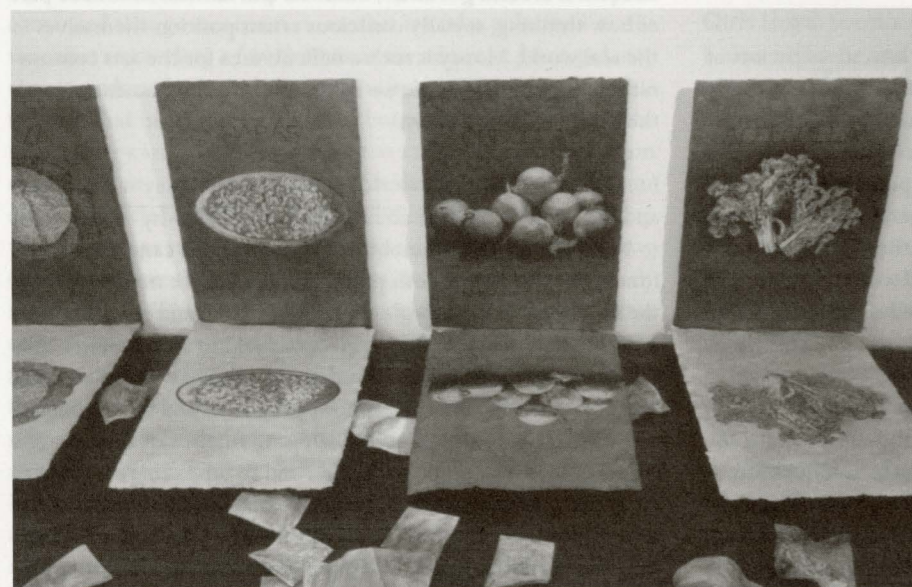
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Thelma Rosner: STILL LIFE.

Curated by Marc Audette. Glendon Gallery, February 21 - March 2, 2002

visual art

Review by Patrick Mahon



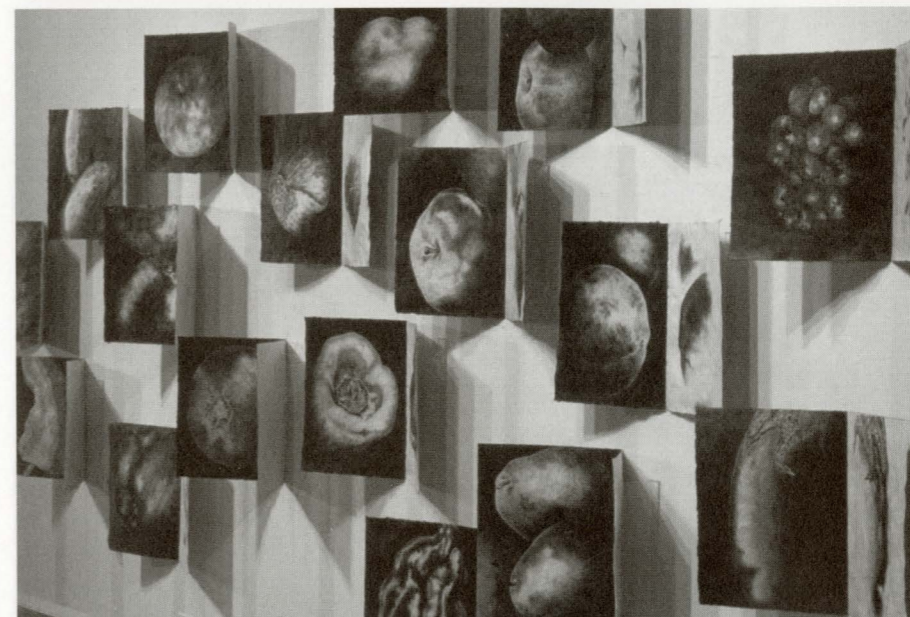
Testimony (detail), 2000-02, oil, handmade paper, cold wax, clay, acrylic, 76x244x91cm.

In recent months, reports of increasing violence between Palestinians and Israelis in the Middle East have filled our newspapers and the airwaves; this suggests that an imminent solution to the longstanding conflicts is a remote possibility indeed. And now that September 11 casts a long shadow over the violence, the situation is more freighted than before. It seems that the territories at stake have been shown to be a geographic lynchpin for religious and political hostilities that fan out to many parts of the globe.

It is important to acknowledge the foregoing as a backdrop to the recent exhibition "Still Life" by London artist Thelma Rosner — a painter whose Jewish heritage has informed her practice of many years. In a brief statement to introduce the three painting installations that constitute her latest project, Rosner explains:

My work of the past few years is located at the intersection of two subjects. The first is the traditional metaphors of still life painting (concerning) issues of gender, the fragility of the body, the passing of time and mortality. The second is the direct significance of food as an element in cultural and social history.

With this, Rosner's writing proceeds to introduce *Still Life with Her Recipes*, a work that presents a series of paintings on handmade paper that structurally resemble open books, and show depictions of fruits and vegetables. It is a tribute to two women who, during their internment in Nazi concentration camps, wrote recipes as a means of cultural remembrance and as an attempt at psycho-spiritual survival. A second



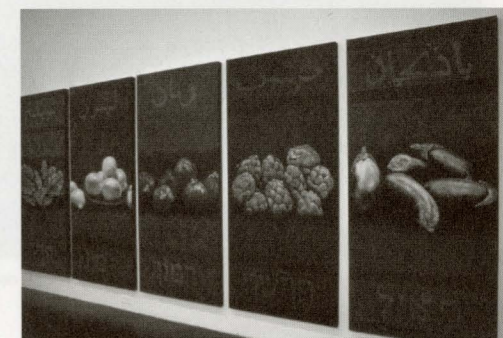
Still Life with Her Recipes (detail), 1999-2000, oil, handmade paper, cold wax.

piece in this exhibition, *Andalusia*, is a series of five highly coloured, vertical rectangular paintings of food, each bordered by historically informed decorative patterns and Arabic and Hebrew texts. According to Rosner, this work was inspired by her knowledge of the harmonious connection between Muslims and Jews in medieval Spain, which led to a flowering of culture and learning. In a third beautifully managed installation entitled *Testimony*, Rosner presents another set of book-like paintings on paper set at floor level. These objects are surrounded by dozens of crumpled clay "leaves" that suggest a scattered, disassembled ceramic book. This work, much like the first one mentioned, presents black-and-white still-life paintings of fruits and vegetables. According to Rosner's statements, the work refers to the act of denouncing Jews to the Spanish Inquisition. These denunciations exposed those "crypto" or hidden Jews who had converted to Christianity during the time of the Inquisition but were discovered as continuing to cook according to Jewish dietary custom.

Central to a viewer's engagement with Thelma Rosner's projects is the question as to what the potential affect of such paintings might be, given the present political climate of the Middle

East and the content motivation behind Rosner's work. Certainly the artist's choice of subject matter and its treatment (i.e., food taken from a domestic context presented through still-life painting, a practice that invokes both a sense of the mundane and the existential) is not continuous with the history of antiwar art. We need only think of Goya's *Disasters of War* to remind ourselves of the tradition to which Rosner alludes and from which she distances herself. So, we are left to ponder what Rosner's project is attempting.

I may risk oversentimentalizing Rosner's practice by offering a reading of it in connection and in contradistinction to significant antiwar and anti-terrorist projects initiated by women, and in some instances, by mothers. Yet Rosner's work unavoidably falls in line with aspects of works by other women cultural producers concerned with violence. American artist Nancy Spero's early anti-Vietnam War paintings are visceral diatribes; ultimately they gave way to her images from the 80s and 90s where the fertile feminine is asserted as powerful in the face of violence and patriarchal oppression. Such works stand on the shoulders of politically charged images made by German anti-fascist artist Kathe Kollwitz. Her early-twentieth-century



Andalusia (detail), 2001-02, oil paint, canvas, 183x457 cm.



Testimony (detail), 2000-02, oil, handmade paper, cold wax, clay, acrylic, 76x24x91cm.

black-and-white graphics make visceral the intense experience of women — and specifically mothers — in wartime.

My examples, despite foregrounding the connection between antiwar attitudes and women's cultural work, depart with Rosner's strategy in that the politics attributable to the works and artists noted are always strongly in evidence. With Thelma Rosner's often beautiful and poetic projects, the political dimension is allusive and subtle. So we continue to be challenged to consider the efficacy of her approach to the subject of her paintings.

Given our quandry, I think it is important to note that, as a painter of the still-life genre, Thelma Rosner has admitted to being strongly influenced by seventeenth century Spanish painter Cotan. It is interesting to observe that in the works of that artist, rather than presenting food as a form of nourishment, fruits and vegetables are shown in settings used for preservation and storage: in cold-storage rooms and similar contexts. Knowing of these influences, we must conclude that Rosner is utilizing an approach that is not preoccupied with death and decay — nor is she attempting to rail against it like Spero and

Kollwitz. Instead, Thelma Rosner paints imagery that in essence confronts the idea of violence and death with representations that are preoccupied with the desire to retain what is living. So, food and the domestic context become eloquent and stable in the face of preoccupations with terror and mutability.

Can beautiful paintings "speak" in a world where a barrage of media images make violence and conflict a daily staple? If they can, they surely do so quietly. Yet the subtle and necessary project of Thelma Rosner does act as an *almost inaudible* command that insists that aggression must not be the only form of resistance.

Paintings cannot stop people from wreaking war and terror upon one another — this is surely true of the situation in the Middle East today. Painting can, however, offer moments of pause, where an unjust thought might be disrupted, or a mind might be changed. Providing these moments of reflexive pause is certainly an important though ultimately subdued form of social action.

Patrick Mahon is an artist and critic who lives in London, ON.

Obvious

Kelly Mark

Stride Gallery, October 12 - November 10, 2001

Review by Shelley Ouellet

visual art

Some people find delicious satisfaction from colouring inside the lines. Playing by the rules is essential in any civilized society and it can be pleasurable surrendering oneself to the job. Kelly Mark's "Obvious" is the result of three such self-assigned tasks. The show includes two videos that zero in on banality and drawings that are silent, mechanical explosions. She spotlights the bliss of monotony and the fun in everyday life while pointing to the economics, ethics and politics of labour.

More than a dozen of the Toronto-based artist's "Letraset Drawing Series" line the walls of Stride Gallery, creating a horizon of swirling shapes. Two video monitors in the space play Mark's "Sniff" and "Cross Walk" continuously. The drawings in the exhibition are selected from a series of fifty works created this year. Each drawing is an untitled, 11" x 14" work on paper framed and hanging side by side in perfect, neat lines on both sides of the gallery. "Cross Walk" is a new video work documenting a man running back and forth across an unidentified intersection as many times as the lights allow. "Sniff," a video of the artist's cat responding to various household objects, was taken from an installation of the same name presented at the Contemporary Art Gallery in Vancouver last year. Mark uses photography, performance, installation, sculpture and drawing to elevate tiny actions or events that might otherwise go unnoticed. The finished work is the residue of a considered process and insightful observation of ordinariness.

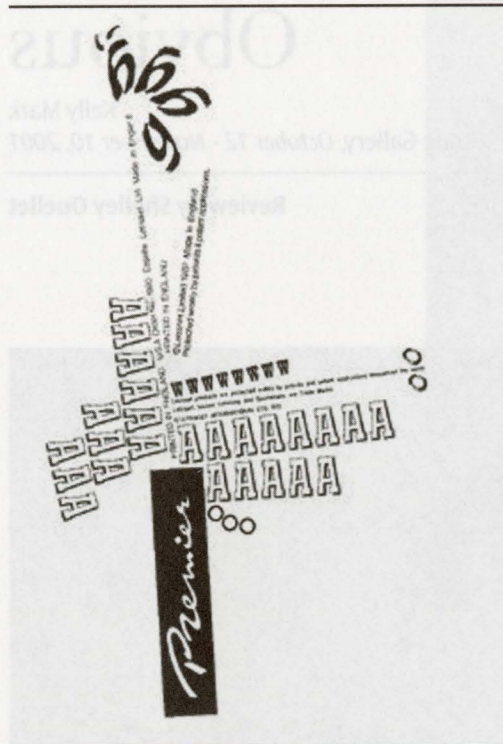
Each of the drawings in the exhibition is meticulously made and installed. A spray of hundreds of Letraset letters, numbers and symbols rubbed onto the paper create seemingly



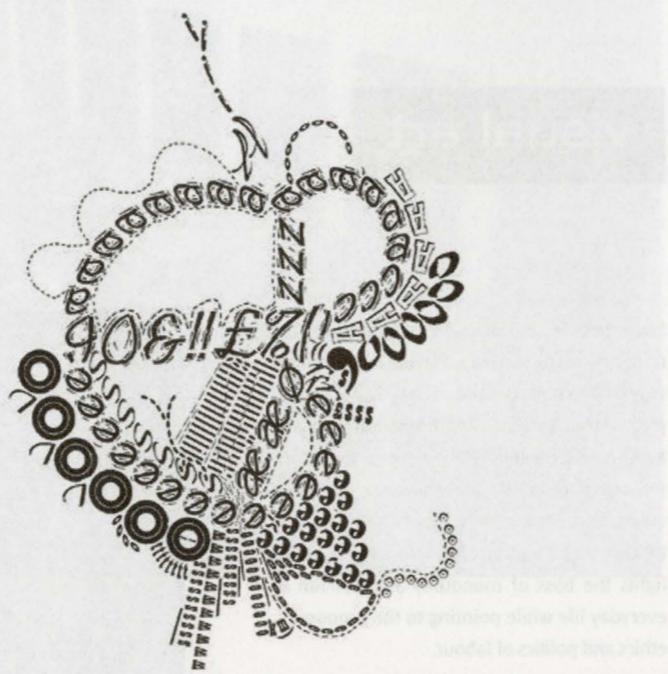
Installation shot of Sniff w/ Letraset Drawings at Stride Gallery, Calgary 2001



Sniff (video still), Kelly Mark, 1999, VHS video, 7:30 w/ sound.



Premier, Kelly Mark, 2001, Letraset on paper, 28 x 36 cm, part of Letraset Drawing Series.

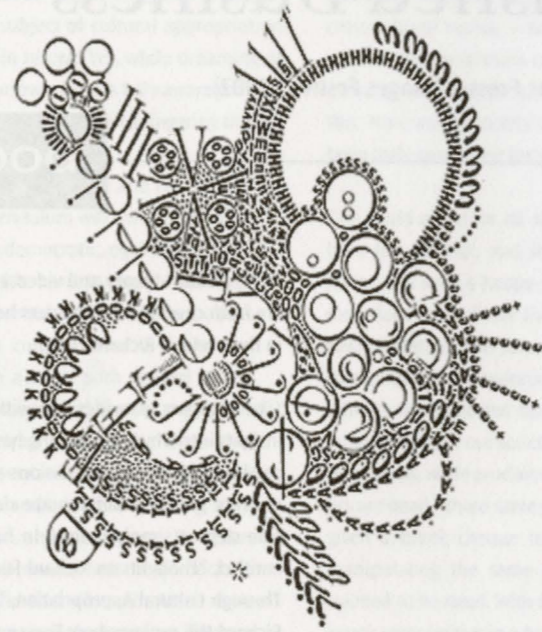


007, Kelly Mark, 2001, Letraset on paper, 28 x 36 cm, part of Letraset Drawing Series.

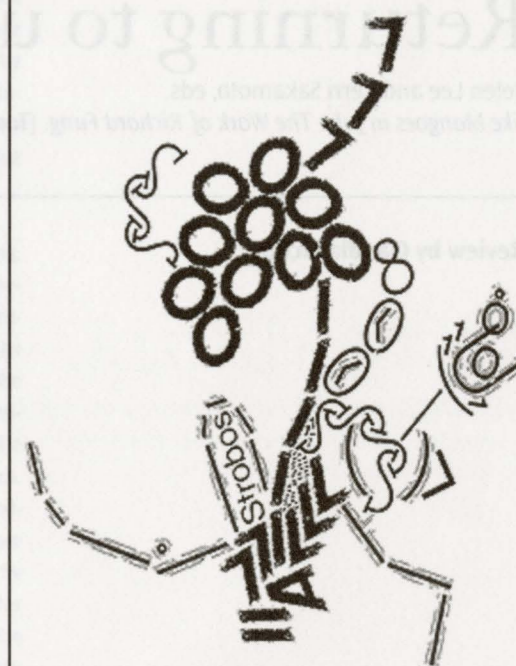
organic forms. While there is a definite sense of order, the left-to-right, vowel-or-consonant rules of language do not apply here. Instead curving lines of nonsensical text wrap and overlap and trail off into knots of serifs and exclamations. Occasionally there is a "grrrr" or "Helvetica" or even "km" that catches the scanning eye, but each character is used as a mark rather than a signifier of words. It is hard to discern exactly what rules are applied to make these drawings and how she decides when enough is enough. In earlier works, such as the drawings in "Present Tense" at the Art Gallery of Ontario in 1997, she established a simple set of parameters. A pencil was used until it ran out and when that happened the drawing was done. Her working method suggests that perhaps she timed herself or limited the sheets of Letraset used in drawing, but whatever the rules, each drawing adheres to a strict formal aesthetic and requires a substantial amount of work and patience.

Letraset is a medium that speaks of old technology and manual labour. Developments in digital publishing have changed the graphic-design

industry and in the process made Letraset virtually obsolete. Still, anyone who has ever used it knows pleasure of peeling back the velum to release a perfectly set F. It isn't as easy as it sounds and most of those people also know the frustration of pressing in a wrinkle or pulling off a chunk. On close inspection it is clear Mark has experienced far more pleasure than frustration. It is easy to imagine this woman rubbing and peeling, rubbing and peeling until a mistake breaks her rhythm. Obviously each drawing has been painstakingly made and the tiny flaws make the Letraset seem more like a pencil than a printing press. Mark's obsessive mantra is clear and the drawings demand a long and hard look. A special treat is the exhibition title and artist's name elaborately adorned with Letraset rubbed directly on to the gallery wall. This ephemeral work created just for Stride helps place the artist and her work in the space, here and now. This work is more than decoration or didactic; it is the artist's timecard and signature. She has reinvented and revived Letraset to a pre-digital glory and in the same way she uses the unblinking gaze of the video camera to elevate trivial human activity.



Brad's Tattoo, Kelly Mark, 2001, Letraset on paper, 28 x 36 cm, part of Letraset Drawing Series.



Strobo, Kelly Mark, 2001, Letraset on paper, 28 x 36 cm, part of Letraset Drawing Series.

Mark's video works are straightforward and funny. The man in "Cross Walk" runs across the street eight times and then on the next light; six times. He gets tired, but never acknowledges the surveillance. The scenario is not happenstance and technically Mark is setting him up to get in trouble. Fortunately no one around the running man seems to notice or care, but from Mark's vantage point, we do. In "Sniff" she plays what we call "bug the cat" in our house. Her cat responds to having a series of household objects placed with him in the tight frame of the camera. As cat people know, a game like this can end abruptly with a haughty getaway or a nasty scratch. Mark's cat seems compliant and so are we. Each video serves to further illuminate the artist's interests and process of investigation by letting the audience peek over her shoulder while she works.

Unfortunately the installation of the monitors interferes with the flow looking at the drawings. Placing the video monitors with the drawings works against the order and rigour of the installation and makes it awkward to move through

the space. There is an implied rhythm to the installation of the Letraset drawings that encourages methodically moving from one to the next enjoying and in a way, contributing to the working process. It would have been nice to have the video works exhibited in Stride's basement project room rather than the main space. Instead, one monitor playing "Sniff" sits on the gallery floor meowing, while the other, playing "Cross Walk" stands on a plinth blocking the exhibition title. The videos are simple studies and are indicative of Mark's interest in the minutiae of everyday life. The drawings marry craftsmanship and formal aesthetics as well as artistic ingenuity and a Protestant work ethic. In "Obvious," Mark uses materials and media to suit her assignment, executing her work with attention to detail and focused obsession. As I sign the guest book, I am careful to write neatly on the line.

Shelley Ouellet is a Calgary-based, visual artist working primarily in site-specific installations. She has been involved in the contemporary art community for several years both as an exhibiting artist, as an employee and as a hostess.

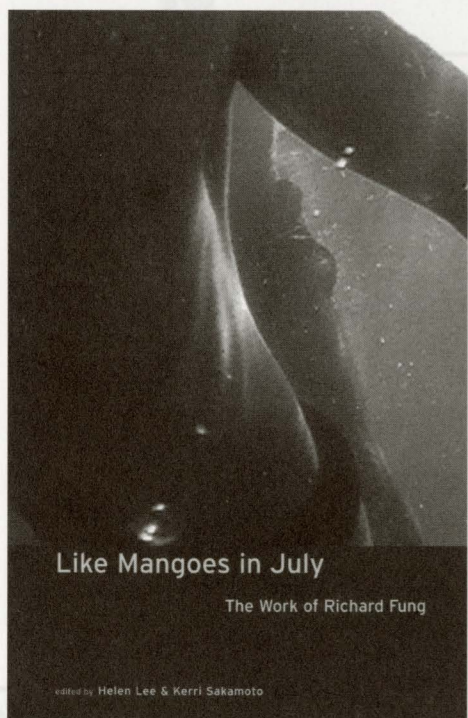
Returning to unfinished Business

Helen Lee and Kerri Sakamoto, eds.

Like Mangoes in July: The Work of Richard Fung. (Toronto: Insomniac Press & Images Festival, 2002).

books

Review by Claudia McKoy



A collection of essays, *Like Mangoes in July: The Work of Richard Fung* pays homage to a man who has spent over twenty years creating humanistic portraits of gay men, lesbians and people of colour in videos such as *Orientalisms* (1984), *Out of the Blue* (1991), and *Sea in the Blood* (2000). In 1990, Fung served on the infamous Advisory Committee to the Canada Council for Racial Equality in the Arts. In 2000, Fung received the Bell Canada Award in Video Art. Throughout his career Fung has remained what Monika Kin Gagnon calls a “crossover artist” who interweaves videos, writings and activism into his artistic tapestry.

Spearheaded by editors Kerri Sakamoto and Helen Lee, *Like Mangoes* harvests a stunning crew of over thirty contributors including Richard William Hill, Gabrielle Hezekiah, Lisa Steele, Clive Robertson, Cameron Bailey, Patricia Zimmermann, Thomas Waugh and John Greyson. Whether in the form of a letter, an intensely academic essay, or a simple thank-you note, each contributor gives the reader a fresh perspective on the scope and depth of the impact that Fung’s work has had upon Canada’s cultural discourse. The many avenues of intrigue in this book gives it a versatility that can withstand the demands of the political-sci-

ence, cultural-theory and video-art fiends who are from cover to cover readers held captivated in the world of Richard Fung.

Like Mangoes provides us with fascinating insights into why Richard Fung has been so successful at furthering discussions about subject matters many Canadians are determined to side-step or simply ignore. In his brief essay entitled, “Thoughts on Richard Fung’s ‘Thinking Through Cultural Appropriation,’” for example, Richard Hill explains how Fung was strategic in the way he addressed the dismissal tactics used by many of Canada’s cultural elite faced with complaints about the negative consequences that occur when members of society’s dominant class appropriate the voices and cultures of those from the marginalized classes:

What was striking about Richard’s response was his ability to articulate concerns about appropriation without appealing to an essentialist identity politics. In response to Timothy Findley’s sarcastic claim that he would now have to ask a tea cozy permission in order to write in its voice, and Linda Rabin’s suggestion that the critique of appropriation implied that she couldn’t borrow from Bach because she was Jewish and not Catholic, Richard wrote: ‘The critique of cultural appropriation is therefore first and foremost a strategy to redress historically established inequities by raising questions about who controls and benefits from cultural resources.’

The book also gives us an intimate glimpse into Fung’s current political hopes and fears. In *Like Mangoes*’s question-and-answer chapter entitled, “Dirty Dozen: Playing Twelve Question’s

with Richard Fung,” Fung tells Helen Lee that he is hopeful that an era of enlightened discussions on the subject of cultural appropriation will once again return. Yet, while dreaming of brighter tomorrows, Fung is fully aware that the horrors of yesterdays are still a lingering threat:

Society moves in cycles and I’m hopeful that the pendulum will swing once again in a more democratic, egalitarian direction. But it’s hard to image that now since corporate interests, party politics and mass culture seem to have converged on a scary path toward a new kind of fascism. And I’m not saying this lightly. If you look at the history of Germany you see many parallels to the discourses and actions emanating from Washington, and even Ottawa. Don’t forget that Germany was a democratic country and that when the Nazis were elected to power there was an extreme vibrant avant-garde artistic milieu and many progressive social and political currents, including the first homosexual rights movement.

But, for now — caught between hope and despair — we are left with the rhetoric of Canada’s celebration of a tolerant multi-ethnic society, which amounts to an exotic menu that serves samosas on Mondays, beef patties on Tuesdays, sushi on Fridays, and McDonald’s for all other unspecified time. This body’s spicy “multi-ethnic tolerance” has a shadowing face with a perpetual index finger resting firm and erect on its lips, *shhing* out active debate. These are the two sides of the same coin that strip away the complexities of cultural diversity to create a paralyzing illusion of neutrality, effectively discouraging pluralist analysis of representation and ownership of cultural resources on the one hand — while justifying hypocritical double standards on the other.

Take the “identity politics is dead” slogan, for example. What the slogan attempts to declare is that traditional identities (Black, white, Asian, woman, and man) are ancient concerns that are no longer relevant in today’s socially “developed” globalized world. An idealistic claim that

prematurely pardons those who have eaten recklessly from the bowl of mass slavery and cross-cultural raping — both served to fuel the present system of mass consumption — without a sincere gesture of repentance. Just ask this: Have any of society’s abused peoples ever been truly given their forty acres and mule?

One could argue for all of us to just get along, bury the hatchet, and let bye-gones be bye-gones. But such a happy-go-lucky social agreement fails to eradicate the damages caused by past trespasses. This serves only to endorse the current trend of abandoning any moral responsibility to the subjected backs that subsidize the inflated status of our society’s dominant factions. Worst of all, while proclaiming that “identity politics are dead,” those same dominant factions are given a blank cheque to generate profits by manipulating the same traditional identities claimed to be dead. With Lee, Fung surfaces the issue’s complexities in a broad and dynamic economic and socio-political framework:

As a society we seem to be going through a very contradictory period in which there is political apathy and disenchantment on the one hand, and an amazing surge of activism on the other. And none of this is straightforward. Everyone seems to proclaim the death of “identity politics,” yet the new class politics often suffers precisely because it fails to attend to a politics of difference: who speak for whom and on what term is still a crucial question. Ironically, at the same time, corporations have done a great job of marketing difference: think Benetton.

And, think Nike’s Mike while you are at it. In a Nike world, Michael Jordan’s Blackness is used only insofar as it promotes a sense of coolness that generates profits. The socio-political realities and consequences of Jordan’s inherent complexion are painted out of the multi-million-dollar corporate picture. In short, the new world order is now armed with new world identities that convolute old ones, re-processing and re-packaging them for the not-so-Black global market, leaving a debris of one-dimensional corpses everywhere. In the face of such an

Returning to

Review by Claudia McKay

Vijay Mishra.

Bollywood Cinema: Temples of Desire. (New York:Routledge, 2001).

Review by Gurbir Singh Jolly

observation, the belief in the death of identity politics becomes far less sustainable.

The reader of *Like Mangoes* quickly realizes that, in the face of the current social and economic tendency to dehumanize humanity, Fung's practice of preserving the soul of his subjects in his videos is a desperately needed symbol of creative resistance. Fung's artistic authenticity and unwavering commitment

demonstrate why we still must engage in pluralist discussions precisely around the issues we most desperately wish to forget. And for this reason, *Like Mangoes* inevitably leaves us with the satisfying taste of meeting a man who has earned the respect of both cohorts and opponents to become one of Canada's most compelling cultural forces.

Claudia McKay is a Toronto-based freelance writer.

books

Vijay Mishra opens *Bollywood Cinema* with vivid recollections of watching early Bollywood films as a boy, in his homeland — Fiji. Bollywood cinema vitally influenced his diverse, diasporic community's sense of "Indianness." In part, Bollywood allowed Indian Fijians to indulge in collective nostalgia for a "home" few had been to or spent much time in. In particular, films about powerful historical or religious characters presented invigorating confirmations of "great ancestry" (a trope that marginalized, diasporic peoples so often desire). Beyond nostalgia, however, Bollywood helped nurture a nuanced, empathetic connection with the significant economic, political and cultural debates being staged within India's popular imagination. As a diasporic Indian writer, Mishra recognizes that Bollywood films, despite being too-often dismissed as formulaic fluff, provided a medium through which India's ancient cultures could subtly negotiate their strength and survival within India's grand program of national transformation — from colonial to post-colonial.

Bollywood Cinema critically examines intertwining histories of film stars, dance and musical styles, gender roles, portraits of violence and meditations on nationality. These histories are, in turn, laced with Mishra's discussions of cinematographic techniques, which he further contextualizes within Indian mythopoetic conventions regarding character construction and plot resolutions (drawn from folk and street theater, as well as the pan-Indian epics *The*

Mahabharata and *The Ramayana*). Mishra also entreats readers to consider how the aesthetic emergence of Bollywood films remains enmeshed in the truly bizarre commercial scope of Bollywood projects: films commonly receive funding from the dangerous and unsavory Mumbai underworld, are often partially set in posh Western locales (everywhere from Vancouver to Zurich), and are screened in over thirteen thousand Indian cinemas, exported to over 100 countries, and seen by over eleven million people *everyday*.

Mishra begins his discussion by vividly illustrating Bombay cinema's fantastically diverse roots. Relying on the entrepreneurship of existing Parsi theaters, nurturing underworld business alliances, appropriating English proscenium arch staging, responding to the vagaries of the rising American films industry, searching ancient Hindu scriptures for perspectives on symbolically rich dialogue, while frequently casting Muslims for leading roles — call it a melange, a mosaic or a mess, Bollywood represented a creative collision of seemingly disparate, if not historically antagonistic cultural communities. Beneath the sweet songs, beautiful actors and crisply conventional plots, Bollywood is a cultural mongrel and a political chameleon.

Such mongrels and chameleons, however, can fan the anxieties of those who preach "Indian purity," as do many of India's current governments, including the ruling federal Bharatiya

Janata Party. Considering the rash of "communal violence" (a euphemism for "fascist violence") that has flared since Hindu fundamentalists destroyed an Ayodhya mosque in 1992, what does fate hold for Bollywood?

Mishra relies on intriguing Hindu historiography to characterize how Bollywood continues to wrestle with notions of identity and fate. Broadly speaking, each generation of Western movie characters (not actors, characters) borrows and reworks cinematic conventions used to construct earlier generations of movie characters. In Bollywood films, however, contemporary film characters are best understood as reincarnations of characters from older films. Reincarnation, as governed and negotiated by complex laws of *dharma* and *karma*, invites significantly different debates regarding the valences of freedom and fate. Furthermore, since characters in Bollywood films are often supersaturated cultural, economic, spiritual and political allegories, their dharmik pressures and karmic potency manifest the *dharma* and *karma* of an entire nation. Regarding freedom over the future, Mishra suggests that close readings of Bollywood films, even those produced in the past ten years, bear witness to characters who seem less interested in escaping *kismet* (fate, which cannot be known or changed) than exercising agency over *andaz* (style, which can range from saccharine obedience to shaded, subversive irony). You may not be free to change your fate, but you are free to choose the style in which you realize it.

Though Mishra generally writes with sustained clarity, he sometimes peppers his work with allusions that remain either obscure or insufficiently contextualized. Readers may wonder if certain passages in *Bollywood Cinema* are presented as interesting asides, or as central tenets of Mishra's thesis. Indeed, one of Mishra's most foundational points — that Bombay cinema is an allegory of the nation in the making — appears most explicitly on page thirty-two, in between parentheses, which are themselves buried within a cumbersome sentence. Though Mishra usually writes very emphatically, his work could use the assisted direction of a sustained meta-narrative voice, one that helps readers follow his reasoning

more smoothly. When Mishra balances his heavy expository voice with simple, explicit metanarrative guidance (as in, "I want to argue that Hindu fundamentalism is symptomatic of an undertheorized silence or repression located at the very heart of national culture"), his arguments become far more accessible. Fortunately, even when Mishra's expositions do become somewhat dense, *Bollywood Cinema* is chalk full of wonderful video stills, couplets from song lyrics, and snippets of film dialogue which vividly illustrate his understanding of Bollywood's artistic complexity and richness. Take, for example, the following lines which Mishra recalls famous Bollywood villains reciting: "is ko hamlet vala poison de do jis se vo to be se not to be ho jayega" (Give him Hamlet's poison so that he may move from being "to be" to "not to be"), and, "is ko liquid oxygen mem duba do liquid ise jine nahim dega aur oxygen ise marne nah im dega" (Drop him into liquid oxygen: liquid won't let him live and oxygen won't let him die").

Bollywood's influence continues to mushroom, especially in the South Asian diaspora, a topic that Mishra addresses in his fascinating final chapter. Clearly, certain sensibilities recounted in the opening scene of Mishra's book (being a part of a diasporic community, watching movies at the Indian cinemas) can still be found in Bollywood cinemas across Canada's urban centers: parents fueling nostalgia while hoping their kids will pick up a bit more Hindi, teenagers anxious to see screen idols while remaining unseen by nosy uncles and aunties, young couples hoping to find hip wedding songs and oily samosas and sweet tea outselling popcorn and coke. And yet, despite Mishra's discussions of *kismet* and *andaz*, diasporic South Asian readers — especially those of us who are becoming thoroughly westernized — may be increasingly uncertain how a \$600 million "foreign" film industry, which relies primarily on melodrama (literally, "plays, with music"), will be able to represent or respond to the anxieties of an increasingly globalized, fascistic, nuclear-armed region.

Gurbir Singh Jolly is an Indian-born, Toronto-raised writer who dreams of producing Bollywood remakes of Stanley Kubric films. He can be reached at st.gurbir@rogers.com.

Culture Crash
by Kathy Walker

Trans Am Apocalypse #3, John Scott, 1998. Courtesy: S.P.I.N. Gallery.

You know the guy, the one with the obnoxious sport car, something souped up, some kind of Trans Am with the stereo blaring and he's probably on steroids and for sure he's got good drugs and so maybe, if you're sixteen and bored, you let yourself slide into the faux leather front seat and he'll drive with one hand, the other coming on to you, and everything will smell like car deodorizer and hair gel, and there'll be bad music and cigarettes, and hey baby, baby ...

Yeah, so this guy is a nightmare, right? Well, it ain't no dream! See, for real — for really real — this "asshole" guy is driving Ontario's culture car.

It's all about the show, about being world class, about having the biggest and the loudest and the tallest and the most famous and Here, these days in Ontario, Hollywood cult of personality fanfaring over bad acting sets the template for culture and now it's not how good, now it's the vacuous spiral of fame and the pomp of see-me, see-me flash.

It's the opposite of the emperor's new clothes. See, now it's the clothes walking around, velvet, purple, lush robes parading around all by themselves, no body inside. This is the age of the spectacle, the time of the surface. Roy Thompson

Hall: the symphony is strung-out, but the hall will be built up, four million up. So we'll have a super building, a lovely, lovely building, with comfortable chairs and good sight lines and state of the art acoustics, but in the end there will be nothing but the echoing of emptiness.

This is sad.

The hot-wheeler is screaming for therapy. We need to get him on the analyst's couch and ask "who/what was it that scooped out your cultural guts?" Here's his story. When industry moved out of urban centers, cities were left with the problem of generating income. Many post-industrial cities turned toward tourism and so, the birth of the spectacular city. As a result the world has become a gallery of architectural monuments and traveling to see the latest rock-star building is the new thing. Archi-tourism. And so we are all going to trundle ourselves around the world, stamp passports and bring home slides of Gehry in Bilbao, Koolhaas in Rotterdam, Isozaki in Los Angeles, Libeskind in Berlin, in Toronto Ugh.

Don't get me wrong, I love a good building as much as the next and I'm ready to agree that Van der Rohe is at par with da Vinci. Architecture, especially public projects, is essential for creating spaces of our communal life on earth. We can't give this up, but we need to be wary of design that is too razzle-dazzle, too glitzy, too much about the show-off and not enough about the dwelling-in.

Hollowed-out. But this is more than just the slight banality of a tinny vibrato. There's a malignancy in the works. As Jane Jacobs notes in *The Life and Death of American Cities*, the money "cataclysms" that go into spectacular projects do not offer sustainable nourishment for an urban economy. Fancy shopping areas and urban tourism do not generate income in healthy ways. Instead some areas of a city are set up on display — posh, with slick architecture and chic cafes — while other neighborhoods are ghettoized. A have/have-not relation is carved into urban space. The argument in favor of this type of economic policy is a version of the old and specious "trickle down" — fund the rich neighborhoods

and the poor will reap the benefits. Not so. Yorkville will get richer; Jane and Finch won't.

We need to be wary of the dangers of surface without substance and of poor urban planning. In addition we must be suspicious of the political economy of the government's cultural funding. The Superbuild Fund is a twenty billion dollar provincial initiative to revitalize infrastructure, highways, hospitals, schools, culture, tourism, etc. Of this twenty, half will come from the government, the other half from the private sector. It's the private sector cooperation that should make us uncomfortable. Private sector influence threatens to operate as the backroom machinations of censorship. This censorship may not be an explicit "this will not be produced." It may take on the more insidious guise of funding only those projects that support the corporate agenda — could you imagine McDonald's funding Brecht? Either way, when the private sector starts funding art, art threatens to become advertising. We should be worried. (If any one tries to tell you that art has always been funded by rich private investors, remind them, please, that just because something has been one way does not mean that it should be that way — just because "we" were misogynist slave traders doesn't mean "we" should be.)

We have to get over the specular. The death knell of post modernity has sounded and now it's time to go beyond the play of surfaces. Vying for world-class ranking is like a high-school popularity contest. It's based on fake smiles, new clothes and superficial good looks. Let's give up trying to be the prom queen and start thinking about ways to promote life and culture in a sustainable, politically conscious way. Support the artists who live here and the communities from which they come. The Trans Am guy will get wasted and drive himself into a ditch. Ontario: get out of that car!

Kathy Walker is a doctoral candidate in social and political thought at York University, a contributing writer at Shift.com, an editor at j_spot: journal of social and political thought and managing editor of The Political Touch Project. Her current research is focused on questions of madness, ethics and political community.

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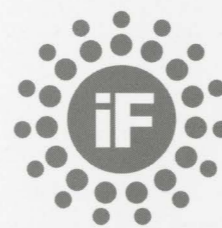
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