FUSE
MAGAZINE

GENUINE
CANADIAN
MAGAZINE

Democracies
Improvised

Dee Dee Halleck

Ultra-red

16 Beaver group

Adrian Blackwell

Kika Thorne

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Cover Image: Photo: Peter Lasch

Democracies Improvised: Participate Here

Moments into Harun Farocki's film, *Videograms of a Revolution,* which probes the 1989 insurrection in Romania via found footage, we encounter the first seconds of a democracy-in-process.

Right after the Ceausescus flee the Central Committee building, a group of citizens, mostly men, has broken into the national television station. They are preparing their first address to the people. Before the camera, though not yet on live television, they speak all at once — arguing, negotiating, improvising what it might mean to be democratic.

In contrast to the frenzy within the occupied television station, amateur footage of a family watching this broadcast from the vantage point of their living room portrays an elderly woman shaking her head, uttering the words, "Nobody can understand."

This depiction of democracy-in-the-making is so different from the one we have come to know in the West. Here, "democracy" is complete, assumed, uncontested — a democracy so realized that a CNN broadcaster, narrating images of thousands of anti-war protesters around the world, could proclaim triumphantly, "This is what we are fighting for!"

These are strange times for democracies, and for language itself — times when, as John Berger recently pointed out, words such as "democracy," "freedom," "justice" and "humanitarian" are used to mean their very opposites.

But don't these contradictions in democracy exist at its very root? In his contribution to Documenta11's platform, *Democracy Unrealized* Berlin, Homi K. Bhabha reminds us that even democracy's progenitor, John Stuart Mill, realized that "one of the major frayings or fragilities of the theory of democracy consisted in the fact that he was a democrat in his country and a despot in another country — in colonial India."

According to Antonio Hardt and Michael Negri, democracy as we know it — one person, one vote — is unrealizable in the contemporary context of globalization, under which citizens — of the nation-state, of international organizing bodies, of an omnipotent capitalism — cannot be represented (politically or aesthetically) within such fixed and unifying boundaries. Beyond democratic organization, they suggest an activation of "counter-power" by the multitude.

In an interview on CBC radio, Manuel Hassassian, vice-president of the University of Bethlehem, recommends that rather than looking to existing regimes around the world, most of which reduce democracy to an electoral process, we might look to emerging democracies, to processes of democratization in the development of grassroots interaction, to the development of NGOs, to the experiences of those building institutions and infrastructures under undemocratic regimes when we attempt to develop a notion of democracy in the context of globalization.

At the heart of all of these democracies, and indeed this issue of FUSE, lie questions of democratic participation: What are the questions of our participation, and who frames them? Beyond the radio call-in show, the focus group, the survey, the poll and the vote, where can and do people, as opposed to "the people," articulate other kinds of participation in the public sphere? How do cultural producers and cultural justice workers articulate their own participation?

In his contribution, Mark Jones suggests that, like it or not, artists participate in a citizenship based upon collective vulnerability, their participation always framed by their role as advocates and foundation-builders in the face of constant requests for justification and threat of dismantling.

Coverage of two recent symposia — *Power to the People* and *Active Practices* — interrogates the role of the activist artist, the models for activist practice and the questions that artists ask themselves about the efficacy of cultural production vis à vis political action.

How do we contend with this role of the artist-as-activist without reverting to the romanticized, moralizing, contradictory and civilizing rhetorics of the liberal democracy we have come to know? Will the activist artist survive beyond its current vogue on the international art scene?

LA-based audio-arts collective Ultra-red struggle with some of these questions, attempting to pose an alternative to the globetrotting activist artist, curator and intellectual. In contrast to short-term and short-lived investigations of "the political" or the temporal limitations of the artist "rising to a cause," they frame their practice as "artistic organizing." In response to their participation in the exhibition, "Democracy When?" curated by Tone Nielson at LA's Pace gallery last spring, they propose longer-term situated engagements within communities, in their case, a social-housing project, in which their aesthetic and political functions are melded and through which they connect to other local globals. Something like this practice is also evidenced in the work of Toronto-based artists Kika Thorne and Adrian Blackwell, whose poster project, turned here into artist's pages, explores the multiple voices silenced by the formal and abstract plans for the revitalization of Toronto's Portlands area.

Investigation into the structure of participation also led to a collaboration between FUSE and 16 Beaver Group, an artist-run collective who create and maintain a series of platforms for artistic and political production in New York's financial district. What began as an attempt to interview this amorphous group, whose activities range from email lists to exhibitions and a monthly lunch, resulted in an experiment with democratic participation in the magazine — an open interview conducted via email and lunch in Toronto and New York. An international collection of artists, activists and cultural workers ended up with more questions than answers. Beyond presenting obvious design challenges, the excess of this material also confronted the structure of the magazine interview itself, complicating the simple call-and-response format of these exchanges, and indeed of many calls to action. The results of this open interview, wrapped and pasted to the front of this issue, is an invitation to play, to piece together, to add to and to frame the questions of your participation.

It is in this open-ended spirit of participation, this democracy improvised and attempted, that we invite you to consider this issue of FUSE.

— **FUSE editorial committee**

One of the Buddha statues destroyed by The Taliban in Bamiyan, Afghanistan

Democracy and Citizenship
at 3AM

by Mark J. Jones

It is the middle of the night, and I am once again trying to make sense of what is around me. People are fighting about democracy again — not *for*, but *about*. Examples of this are rampant, particularly in party politics: parties accuse one another of being anti-democratic, and even within certain federal parties, references to "democratic deficit" have become part of the language of leadership campaigns as they near the end of certain leaders' tenures. In larger global conflicts, wars are justified as countries of "free people" attacking "vicious dictators" (note the many-to-one implication of this, as if to attack a leader is not to attack his or her people). In smaller organizational circles and even in personal matters, democracy becomes a catch-all phrase representing practices of openness and fairness — or, more often than not, their absence. Children now accuse their parents of being anti-democratic.

The shifting of democracy from principle to argument-wedge is not new, but in our current climate, it becomes another indicator of our collective cultural vulnerabilities. Democracy has become the child over whom feuding ideological parents wage custody battles.

Art and democracy have a lot in common. Their forms of expression are very fluid, and often are products of the societies from which they come, constrained by — and many times in opposition to — cultural norms and taboos. Each is often defined by its time and place. After a seventy-two-year battle, women in the United States of America finally won the right to vote in 1920; until then, the American political system was considered by most to be fully democratic — it just needed "updating." Images of women struggling for democratic rights now seem to me to be part history and part art. Indeed, images of historical events often become positioned as art over time: galleries, acknowledging the importance of cultural and institutional memory, host exhibitions of historical images and stories all the time.

One of the presumptions made in western "democratic" nations is that in order for art to flourish, people must be sufficiently free to use that very freedom as a vehicle for artistic expression. If not, its art can become controlled politically, or, in extreme examples, silenced altogether. During the Taliban rule in Afghanistan, art and music were forbidden, and thousands of statues were destroyed, including the most widely known example, two 150-foot Buddhas carved into a mountain in Bamiyan. Through these actions, the Taliban seemed to recognize art as an expression of independent thought and, therefore, as a political force, with possible overtones of rebellion. A year-and-a-half later, Laura Bush cancelled a poetry reading at the White House, noting that its anti-war sentiments were "inappropriate." In both cases, art was seen as challenging given power structures — one democratic, the other decidedly undemocratic — and the response to it as its removal. The presumption that art depends on democracy is false. Democracy makes producing art easier, yes, and potentially provides more sustainable mechanisms for its proliferation. But art existed long before the ancient Greeks built a civilization upon which most contemporary democracies claim to be based — even though the ancient Greeks supported slavery and the oppression of women. But anyway...

Art is not a result of democracy. It supercedes it, ultimately surviving it, in spite of being used in ideological custody battles. At its best, democracy is itself artistic.

No, what democracy and art truly have in common is their ever-present vulnerability, the knowledge that the existence of both is dependent upon our belief in them in the first place, and in our subsequent participation in their processes. In feeling this vulnerability, we inevitably become their citizens.

In *The World We Want: Virtue, Vice and the Good Citizen,* philosopher Mark Kingwell

column

defines citizenship not through physical or political boundaries, but by what he calls a "shared vulnerability": "The idea of citizenship is not the only way we can pursue our commonalities and needs, not the only way to entertain our longings and dreams. But it is a crucial one; and, when linked to the deep insight that we owe a duty of justice to our fellow citizens, the concept of citizenship sheds its dark origins in the project of keeping people out and, reversing the field, becomes a matter of bringing people in." By this definition, all artists share a common citizenship. We know our work is vulnerable to various factors, many of which seem outside of our control: political tides, economic conditions, reactions to our work, even (especially?) by family and friends. Is it any wonder that so many of us are in therapy? For it isn't enough that we exercise our so-called democratic rights to be artists; in spite of this right, we are constantly required to justify our very choice to make art and the necessity of having systems that will support that choice. All artists, through the act of creating, become advocates for art.

Many artists resent having to play advocacy roles and, to be honest, I don't blame them. It's not as though auto workers have to justify why they choose to be auto workers, they just work. Why can't artists just make art? (I know the question is naive, but does this make it any less relevant?) And the discourses of such advocacy change all the time. For several years now, the language of artistic citizenship has been one of "self-sustainability," a desire for proof to offer public (funding) bodies — largely at their request — that art can exist with a reduced level of dependency on their support. From self-sustainability was born "capacity building," the recognition that in order for self-sustainability even to be broached, artists required certain tools and skills to be at their disposal. The language changed again. Now, we are hearing rumbles of "creative consolidation," and while we struggle to figure out exactly what this new buzzword means, we wonder how this will yet again change the nature of our justification arguments. It's a wonder that we all don't crash just from having to keep up with the language. How many people in the

upper bureaucratic circles spend as much time trying to understand artists as we spend trying to decode new justification dialects?

At the end of the day, though, these inequities in the power structures don't change the responsibilities that we as artists share. The artist who wishes to practice art removed from the necessities of ongoing advocacy and support-building is the artist who doesn't accept his or her citizenship in our collective vulnerability.

There is also a citizenship shared by smaller groups that have unique vulnerabilities. For electronic media art, the field in which I work, part of the vulnerability emanates from the ongoing struggle to not be perceived only as an experimental or fringe artform. Many of us say we don't care about this perception, that we believe in electronic-media work as a way of breaking new ground and as expression that can create new forms of audience involvement. These beliefs are glue that binds together the communities of artists working in this arena, and there is no question that we hold those beliefs. But outside our circle, and at times even within it, advocacy work is still part of the job description.

Nell Tenhaaf, a Toronto-based electronic-media artist and associate professor at York University, refers to the vulnerabilities inherent in the medium, "like the difficulty that art institutions have in showing or, especially, owning this work, and the technical obsolescence built into it as in all things technological. Perhaps it is this obsolescence factor that I feel creates the most vulnerability — we are ephemeral in some way." Tenhaaf notes that she builds advocacy into her work: "I am preoccupied with the problem of interpretation, often having a kind of 'supergo' conveyer of meaning within a piece. This is partly because it is science I deal with as a topic, but the technology itself can be a barrier of misunderstanding, of mystification, so I think that the best route for me is to play with that in my work, to revel in it and also undo it."

Artist Michelle Kasprzak agrees, and states that the fear of electronic art expressed by other communities comes from a risk of its break-

down and decay, adding that "many electronics artists embrace and incorporate this notion into their work." The Artist Interface Device (AID) project, initiated by Mike Steventon and headquartered at InterAccess Electronic Media Arts Centre in Toronto, is an interesting example of a group acting as both advocate and citizen, recognizing the vulnerabilities that artists face with regard to accessing the workings of technology. Kasprzak describes it as "a response to the need of artists who are new to electronics to have a simple and clear path into the world of computer hardware interfacing."

In Saskatoon, Garnet Hertz, an electronic-media artist who prefers to be known as just an artist ("it's just art, after all!"), notes that his particular vulnerability is also related to geographical isolation, adding that "although I don't talk to him much, Ken Gregory is somebody that I could [also] share this sense with, especially the feeling of figuring stuff out on your own out of geographic necessity." Hertz sees his own work as attempting to bridge disciplines and institutions traditionally outside of or adjacent to art — engineering, design, the public, history, philosophy and the acquisition of knowledge — noting that although these bridges aren't new, they do create "a bogglingly fun array of possibilities."

Camille Turner's curatorial work, in addition to her own work as an artist, pursues the negotiation of the inclusion of marginalized voices into electronic-media art. "I am organizing and facilitating workshops and projects that will give people who are outside of the community the skills and support they need in order to become fluent in the creative use of technology." These artists remind me that the sense of belonging to a group resides in the acknowledgment of common and intersecting values and vulnerabilities, and the willingness to work through potential impediments.

Yes, both democracy and art claim to support diversity of opinion and expression as necessary elements to their lifeblood. But perhaps art and citizenship are closer cousins. Like six degrees of separation, most people are connected by at least a few intersecting vulnerabilities. Expressing and reflecting these takes nerve, and in doing so, artists continue to help connect societies with the nature of citizenship, and provide critical alternatives to the assertions of absolute strength purported by many political powers.

Mark J. Jones is a new-media artist, project manager and writer. He is currently chair of InterAccess Electronic Media Arts Centre in Toronto.
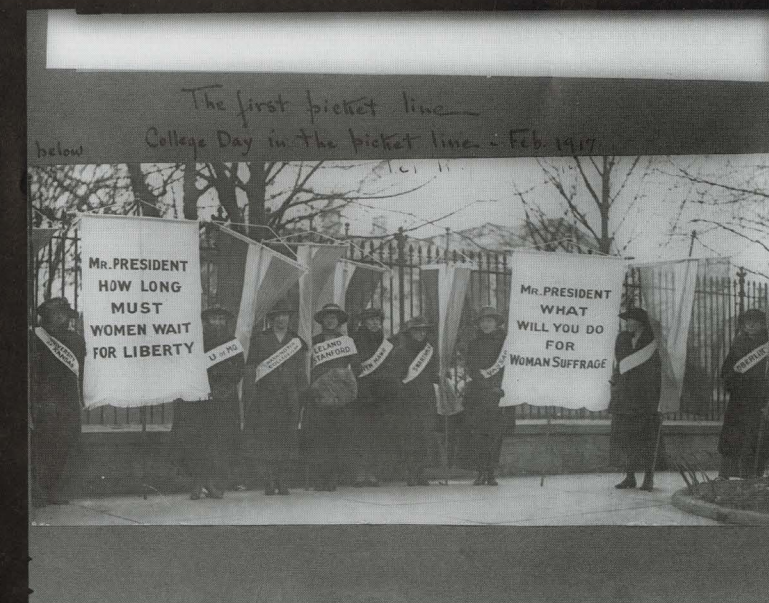
Women suffragists picketing in front of the White house in 1917. Politics becomes documentation becomes history become art.
Photo: U.S. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division [LC-USZ62-31799 DLC]

column

This winter FUSE invited 16 Beaver Group, an artist-run collective from New York's financial district, to participate in an interview.

Given the context of this issue, which probes articulations, structures, zones and aesthetics of democracy, and 16 Beaver Group's global and diffuse membership, we decided to open up the interview — to explore the process of questioning and answering as a form of organizing and to generate new territories of participation.

Between February 19 and 21, personalized questions were sent to individuals and email lists affiliated with FUSE and 16 Beaver Group. Recipients/constituents were invited to answer them and pose a question of their own, within a time limit of three days. On the third day, a simultaneous lunch took place in Toronto and New York to discuss our next steps.

We now have more questions than answers. They are collated, printed and pasted to the front of this issue of FUSE. We invite you to play, order, disorder, highlight, add — to continue to question and answer.

An Open Interview and Lunch (February 19 - 21, 2003)
16 Beaver Group, New York, NY
http://www.16beavergroup.org/
and
FUSE Magazine, Toronto, Canada
http://www.fusemagazine.org/

16 Beaver Group and FUSE Magazine invite everyone who receives this message to participate in a three-day long interview. A final version will be published as part of "Territorials": a series of conversations with artists and collectives engaged in the mapping of new territories, citizenships and structures of participation. The interview will end on February 21st with a simultenous lunch in Toronto and New York. The final piece will be published in FUSE magazine and as a component of the 16 Beaver web site.

The conventional structure of the interview inevitably presents artists who work collectively with the problem of having to reduce multiple, ever-changing voices to an always awkward and inaccurate unison. The structure of this interview goes against the "I" of the interviewer and the "We" of the collective, not to erase them, but to create space for the exchange of multiple voices: You-I, We-They, She-He, We-We, etc. By positioning the voice of the interviewer in the direction of the publication, it also attempts to highlight existing links between social networks, aid the formation of new contacts, and produce more complex relationships between those who ask and those who answer. This format will allow for the extension of previous questions into new contexts and bring the expression of an always temporal and fragmentary practice into focus.

On February 19 we are sending out a set of questions through various channels related to 16 Beaver and FUSE Magazine. Each message only contains one question, which will hopefully be of interest to you, the receiver. If you want to participate, please answer the question you receive (the response need not be long) and add your own question. Then forward your question to one or various individuals-groups you think might want to answer it.

LUNCH IN NEW YORK AND TORONTO
Between 12pm - 2pm on Friday February 21st, those who wish to participate in this project in an actual conversation are invited to attend a lunch at
16 Beaver Street, 5th floor
New York, NY
Or
Fuse Magazine
c/o
Bo De Duyen Inc
254 Spadina Av
Toronto, ON

16Beaver is the address of a space initiated/run by artists to create and maintain an ongoing platform for the presentation, production, and discussion of a variety of artistic/cultural/economic/political projects. It is the point of many departures/arrivals.

FUSE Magazine has provided a forum for critical dialogue related to art/media/politics in Canada and abroad for 25 years.

PARTICIPANTS (in order of appearance)

JG	Janna Graham	KJ	Katja Jedermann	PS	Paige Sarlin
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PF	Peter Fend	PM	Pierangelo Maset	TD	Terence Dick
CS	Caspar Stracke	VR	Viv Reiss	CS	Catherine Sicot
SS	Shelly Silver	LC	Lottie Child	RG	Rene Gabri
RD	Ricardo Domínguez	AB	Anna Best	SM	Steve Morton
WS	Wolfgang Staehle	SR	Stella Rollig	EG	Esther Gabara
KS	Kim Simon	CN	christopher naylor	GG	Geoff Garrison
FBAL	Fuse Board and List	NL	Nichoals Lowe	AHK	Alia Hasan-Khan
MUBL	Mercer Union Board List	ES	Esther S	AA	Ayreen Anastas
CP	Cesare Pietriusti	CD	Camille Dorney	JO	Jocelyn Olcott
BVDP	Liesbeth Bik & Jos van der Pol	BPP	Barbara Putz-Plecko	MS	Marc Schachter
GS	Greg Sholette	CD	Camille Dorney (E-mail)"	HH	Hans Haacke
LJP	Linda J. Park	CC+KB	Carole Conde and Karl Beveridge	VF	Vera Frenkel
GN	Giancarlo Norese	DB	David Butler	KN	Kevin Noble
BC	Ben Cain	DH	David Haley	KH	Kathy High
LL	Loraine Leeson	EA	Eileen Adams	JM	John Menick
KA	Knut Asdam	GS	Greg Sholette	GG	Grady Gerbracht
DR	Dont Rhine/Ultra Red	HM	Herbert Maly	MR	Michael Rakowitz
KF	Kirsten Forkert	IS	Ines Sanguinetti	AD	Adam Decroix
SK	Susan Kelly	JP	Jenny Polak	OE	Octavian Esanu
RP	Robin Pacific	JD	Jorgelina Dominguez	TP	Tadej Pogacar
CM	Carmen Moersch	PR	Peter Ride	VT	Valerie Tever
B+B	B + B	SR	Sue Ridge	AN	Angel Nevarez
EP	Emily Pringle	TI	Tomomi Iguchi	SR	Sara Reisman
		MS	Masa Strbac	EF	Emilio Fontin
		MH		BH	Brian Holmes
		EJ	Emily Jacir	PW	Peter Walsh

AN OPEN INTERVIEW AND LUNCH
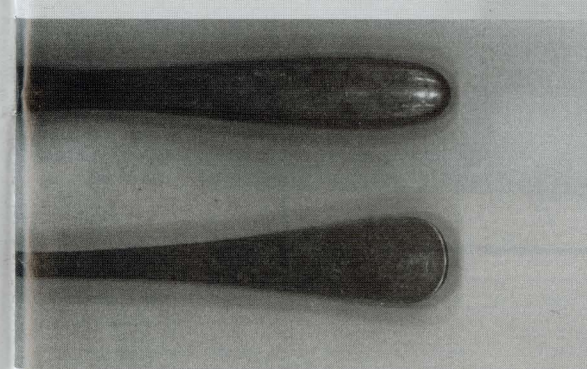
PORTLANDS PEOPLE'S ZONE - A TOOLBOX OF POSSIBILITIES

ambience of a future city - kika thorne + adrian blackwell

portlands strategy based on a discussion between helen lenskyj,
stefan kipfer and michael shapcott of bread not circuses 29/08/01

1. The Portlands is the size of a small city. It holds the potential to house Toronto's 4,000 homeless, 30,000 of the families at serious risk of homelessness on the waiting list for subsidized housing, as well as a percentage of international refugees to Canada. However, the Portlands can only be effectively redeveloped with the engaged participation of these communities.

2. Capitalist development imagines every site as an empty space, a clean slate; but the Portlands are already filled with social, natural and industrial uses.

3. Toronto has progressive models for creating urban neighborhoods, however these projects were implemented through conscious procedures, requiring willful resistance to existing market forces.

The design of the Portlands must proceed "not as a form, but as a process to create structures which are as porous, as multi-functional, and as open to re-organization by the users and inhabitants, as possible." This method should not only engage people who intend to build and use the site, but it also needs to guarantee the "capacity for people in the future to self-define their lives outside the constraints of private property, without the constraints of bureaucratic organization." To renovate the Portlands as a space for living, working and playing, rather than as zone of real estate speculation and exchange, will require two minimum conditions: collective ownership of land and a decision making structure open and accountable to residents, rather than to bureaucrats and investors.

This system of alternatives argues that creative thinking has to dig itself out from under the single thought of contemporary western politics — global competitiveness, to ask what forms of development could most improve the public and private geography of Toronto's citizens. This city could be a very desirable place, if we confronted its serious social and ecological problems directly, rather than by postponing and obfuscating solutions with the false hopes of trickle-down economics. Based on Bread Not Circuses' research to oppose the Toronto 2008 Olympic bid, Helen Lenskyj, Stefan Kipfer and Michael Shapcott chose to wrest the Portlands away from the "bourgeois playground" it is destined to become, if it remains uncontested. Instead they discuss strategies of inventive social developments, demand clean earth, air and water, find value in many of the existing conditions, and speak to the necessity of building links between organized communities, all culminating in a loose design for a self-managed process. This document translates their analysis into three types of investigation: Planned Social Spaces, Communities of Resistance and Autonomous Zones/Wild Places. Each proposition "is not a model, it is merely a glimpse, you can't simply magnify it and plop it onto the Portlands." These elements are integral and potentially contradictory with one another. Dissent between concerned individuals is crucial for the balance of the Portland's ecosystem. A socially and environmentally responsible district will not be built without sustained effort, and even these progressive intentions are potentially destructive without the freedom of the unplanned, the overlooked, the wild autonomous zones.
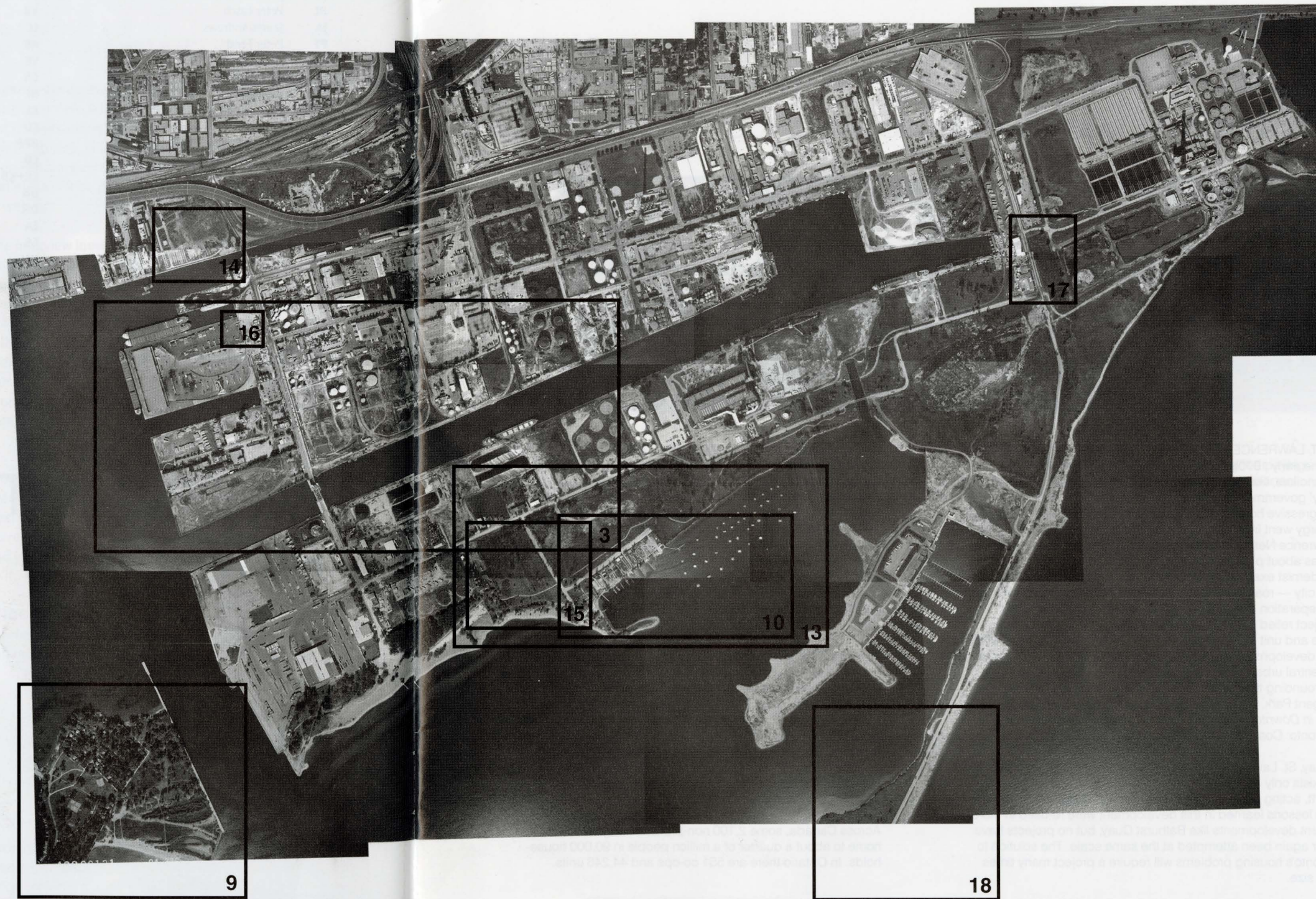
PLANNED SOCIAL SPACES   COMMUNITIES OF   RESISTANCE   AUTONOMOUS ZONES/WILD PLACES

1 ST. LAWRENCE NEIGHBOURHOOD

In the early 1970's housing activists and progressive City councilors, like John Sewell, forced the David Crombie's 'Red Tory' government to pursue (or at least appear to pursue) a progressive housing policy. Over the decade much of the city's energy went into a single large project close to the core. The St. Lawrence Neighborhood was designed to test a series of new ideas about public housing. Contrary to the logic of many modernist examples, it was to be continuous with the fabric of the city — roads would run through it. As opposed to the logic of separation inherent in previous housing proposals, this project relied on a mix of program, tenure, income, building type and unit size. It included retail and institutional uses within the development and it was built to concentrate green space in a central urban park, instead of diffusing it in undefined areas surrounding the buildings as typical modernist examples, like Regent Park, had done. [*East/West A guide to where people live in Downtown Toronto,* Byrtus, Fram, McClelland ed. (Toronto: Coach House books, 2000)]

Today, St. Lawrence is a healthy downtown mixed income area. It exists only because of the dedication of municipal government, acting under the pressure of urban social movements. The lessons learned in this development were re-used in more recent developments like Bathurst Quay, but no projects have ever again been attempted at the same scale. The solution to Toronto's housing problems will require a project many times this size.

2 ARCADIA HOUSING CO-OP, BATHURST QUAY

In December 1980, DJ Stover + Andy Krehm approached the Co-operative Housing Federation of Toronto, CHFT, with an idea to build an artist's housing co-operative. Community Artists of Toronto for Co-op Housing aka CATCH had a similar idea. In 1982 they joined forces. On August 1, 1986, with the support of the Co-op Housing Federation, municipal, provincial and federal funding, design by A.J. Diamond and Company Architects and construction by Bradsil, Toronto artists gained occupancy to a sliding scale residence. The Arcadia Housing Co-operative contains 110 live/work studios for artists, a performance space, woodshop, kiln and an art gallery.

Housing Co-ops are controlled by their residents, who are members with a voice and a vote in decisions about their housing. There is no landlord. Co-op housing offers a home, not an investment. In a typical Canadian co-op, from one-quarter to three-quarters of households pay a reduced monthly charge, based on their income. The others pay the full monthly charge set when the members approve the co-op's yearly operating budget. Housing co-ops operate as close to cost as possible. The full monthly housing charge rises only as the co-op's costs increase.

Across Canada, some 2,100 non-profit housing co-ops are home to about a quarter of a million people in 90,000 households. In Ontario there are 551 co-ops and 44,246 units.

3 UNLOADING A FREIGHTER

The function of the portlands as an active port provides resistance to the gentrification which is transforming the downtown. While it would be a mistake to nostalgically valorize the toxic petroleum industries which covered the port not long ago, it is possible to imagine a situation in which industries at different scales would encourage a healthy live/work environment for a diverse public.

4 REDPATH SUGAR REFINERY

Unionized workers have an interest in maintaining good paying industrial jobs in Toronto. Their solidarity could be a important link in the creation of urban alternatives.

PLANNED SOCIAL SPACES COMMUNITIES OF RESISTANCE AUTONOMOUS ZONES/WILD PLACES

5 PARADISE LAKE YMCA

The Kitchener-Waterloo YMCA Environmental Learning Centre is a functioning model for environmentally sustainable collective living. The project, completed in 1996, includes two buildings that recycle wastewater, use passive and active solar power, non-toxic materials, composting toilets and natural ventilation. A south-facing greenhouse provides 70% of the "Day Center's" heating. The space heats up to extremely high temperatures in its highest sections; in the winter hot air is ducted down under the concrete floor of the adjacent central meeting room; in summer, heat can be quickly evacuated through vents at the top of the structure. The greenhouse includes a "living machine" which processes black and grey water through a series of pools containing different plant and animal ecosystems, which feed on biological material. The room is an internal natural environment. The "Earth Residence" is heated using a high efficiency masonry wood stove. The stove burns so hot that there are almost no emissions, it stores so much of its heat within its masonry structure that it only needs to be fired twice a day. Electricity for the two buildings is generated using a windmill, and photovoltaic cells on the grass roof of the Earth Residence. [Bronwen Ledger, "Natural Harmony" (*Canadian Architect,* July 1996)]

6 COMMUNITY CENTRES

As well as the facilities for physical exercise and relaxation, community centers often provide access to resources, daycare and a space for neighborhood residents to respond to collective needs; creating bases for community organizing.

former houses and streets
retained structures
added structures

7 PRO-HOME (GROW HOME, FLEXHOUSE)

In 1990 an affordable housing prototype called the Grow Home was built at McGill University in Montreal. Designed by Witold Rybczynski, Avi Friedman and Susan Ross, the Grow Home is a modest affordable house, which can be altered and finished inside as a family grows larger or their means increase. In Edmonton, The Flexhouse, developed by architect Ron Wickman suggests a small open span building which can be added to incrementally to create a courtyard house. These two flexible housing solutions are geared towards working class Canadians shut out of the new home market. [Mark Poddubiuk, "Born Again Flexibility," (*Canadian Architect,* August 1999)]

In Toronto, Architects Alliance has been developing a Pro-Home as a solution to the crisis currently facing homeless individuals, and families on social assistance. The building would be owned by its inhabitant and designed around a base unit of 175 square feet, which could serve as shelter for one person. Additional units could be built beside and above the initial unit, until the household's spatial needs are fulfilled. "This incremental approach to housing development emphasizes housing as a process affordable to many, rather than as a product accessible to few." The Pro-Home is being used as a typological model for a proposal to move Tent City from its temporary location at Cherry and Lakeshore to an alternative site in the Portlands. As the future inhabitants define their homes and neighborhoods, they can also find employment and experience in organizing, research, design and construction; drawing both on prior knowledge as well as developing skills with the assistance of external expertise. [The Gardens: A proposal for the Relocation of Tent City, Home Aid Housing Corporation, 23 April, 2001.]

8 BOLO 'BOLO

If you dream alone, it's just a dream, if you dream together it's reality. (Brazilian Folk Song)

Bolo 'Bolo is a utopian proposal for the creative "substructuring" (a combination of subversion and construction) of the entire world, in order to allow all people currently subjected to the "planetary work machine" to realize their desires for agency, autonomy and collectivity. Bolo 'Bolo proposes that change can only occur through "ABC Dyscos", alliances between small groups located in different sectors of the world economy: the A deal — free market/white collar, the B deal — industry/worker/state, and the C deal — piece work/underground economies/home work. By making these alliances local and global it could be possible to create Bolo 'Bolo, an organization of autonomous communities functioning without money or state, whose central rule of operation is hospitality. Bolo 'Bolo proposes the necessity of agricultural self-sufficiency as the first step towards freedom. "The Kodu (agricultural practice of the community) abolishes the separation of producers and consumers in the most important domain of life, the production of food. But the Kodu isn't just that, it's the whole of the ibu's (people's) intercourse with "nature." The power of the state is ultimately based upon its control over the food supply. Only on the basis of a certain degree of autarky can the Bolos (communities) enter into a network of exchange without being exploited."

"Bolo 'Bolo isn't only a way for the ibu (person) to conquer more time, but also a way for it to get more space." The proposal argues for the creative appropriation and modification of the existing built environment. [P.M., *Bolo 'Bolo* (New York: Semiotexte, 1995)]

PLANNED SOCIAL SPACES COMMUNITIES OF RESISTANCE AUTONOMOUS ZONES/WILD PLACES

9 TORONTO ISLANDS RESIDENTIAL TRUST

In December 1993, the Toronto Islands Residential Community Trust was established by legislation (Bill 61 as amended) to manage the land and buildings associated with the Island community, on behalf of the island residents and the general public. Under the legislation, residents on Ward's and Algonquin Islands are able to hold title to their homes and lease the lots on which their houses stand for a period of up to 99 years. The Trust is mandated to provide stewardship of the Island residential community, ensuring that it is maintained according to the principles which islanders fought hard for, in their 30 year fight to retain their homes.

One of the core principles of the Trust is to ensure that the sale of island homes and leases, which sit on public land, do not result in windfall profits for the owners. Under the legislation, Island homes and leases may only be bought and sold through the Toronto Islands Residential Community Trust. The system of regulated prices for homes and leases, sold only to people on the Purchasers' List, ensures that this principle is maintained. The Trust is also charged with managing its five public buildings. [torontoisland.org]

10 OUTER HARBOUR SAILING FEDERATION

The Outer Harbour Sailing Federation represents nine community water-sport clubs that share a small strip of Toronto's outer harbour for the enjoyment of sailing and rowing enthusiasts. At the Westwood Sailing Club, St. Jamestown Sailing Club (www.sailtoronto.net) and the Mooredale Sailing Club boats are cooperatively owned. OHSF has been connecting the people of Toronto with affordable waterfront recreation for 30 years, practicing the principles of affordability, community outreach and community involvement. [www.outerharbour.net]

11 GREEN WORKERS ALLIANCE

The Green Workers Alliance (GWA) was formed in late 1991 by labour groups (including the Canadian Auto Workers local 1967), as well as social and environmental activists, primarily in response to three factors: the shutdown of the Caterpiller plant in Brampton, long-standing health and safety concerns on the part of the CAW and other unions, and contemporary Japanese examples in which factories were retooled to allow for the production of environmentally responsible products.

The GWA proposed that the Caterpillar plant could be re-opened either under the direction of a crown corporation or as a worker's co-operative. The new factory could produce energy efficient windows for suburban housing. This new function would allow many of the current workers skills to be used while creating a market not currently serviced in the GTA and therefore unlikely to cause layoffs in competing factories. [R. Keil, *Making a difference — making green work in Possible Urban Worlds — INURA* (Birkhäuser-Verlag: Basel/Boston/Berlin, 1999)]

By linking the health needs of workers to environmental issues in both the home and the factory GWA helps to create a powerful force in the progressive redevelopment of industrial spaces like the Portlands.

12 NEIGHBOURS

Nearby communities, such as Regent Park, Moss Park, Trefann Court and St. Lawrence, many of whom consist largely of new immigrants and low-income families, have a considerable stake in the development of the Portlands as a recreation space and well-planned affordable housing.

In Regent Park "housing authority waiting lists have eliminated the income diversity that originally existed in the neighborhood. The working poor have largely been eliminated as priority waiting lists have favoured those most in need. Now, not only are most of the residents relying on social assistance, but also there is a high proportion of single parent, mostly female-headed households. It's residents now speak an excess of 67 languages and more than 70% trace their origins to non-European roots; 60% were not born in Canada, and most of these have immigrated within the last 10 years." [Richard Milgrom, "Regent Park at 50" (*Canadian Architect,* August 1999)]

PLANNED SOCIAL SPACES COMMUNITIES OF RESISTANCE AUTONOMOUS ZONES/WILD PLACES

13 CRUISING AT CHERRY BEACH
"This is a small wooded area down by Lake Ontario, which is intersected by the paved bicycle trail that goes along the lake. There are numerous and well-worn walking trails too. Just get onto these trails and you will see lots of guys wandering about in various degrees of undress; some sunbathing on their blankets trying to entice a hot stud their way. There are certain bushes that have had areas carved out of them, almost like a cave, and these are great places to be more secluded and private if that's what you want — group sex is very easy here — many willing men!"
[Guide To Gay Cruising, Toronto - squirt.org]

15 PARTIES
Depending on the night, 150 to 500 people could show up to a party at Cherry Beach. With speakers buried in the sand, big fires, good food, allegedly the best names in Toronto's underground dance music perform here. Occasionally promoters would set up in the clearing north of the beach. These parties radiate out into the moonlight, where lovers hide in the Sumac.

14 TENT CITY
"Over the course of 18 months beginning in 1999, a number of homeless individuals built shelters on a vacant, privately owned parcel of land on the Toronto waterfront located west of Cherry Street and south of Lakeshore road. Over time, more people built shelters on the same site and many were upgraded through the use of durable materials and housing forms. Over the same period of time, people at the site began to form a community characterized by mutual help and supportive social networks.

"Dubbed 'Tent City' by the Toronto media and others, this is a unique community within the City, comprised of homeless individuals who have come together to try and solve their own housing problems using what essentially amounts to a self-help approach."
[*The Gardens: A proposal for the Relocation of Tent City.* Home Aid Housing Corporation, 23 April 2001]

PLANNED SOCIAL SPACES   COMMUNITIES OF   RESISTANCE   AUTONOMOUS ZONES/WILD PLACES

19 PRECEDENT: MONTREAL SQUAT

On Friday 27th of July 2001, 75 squatters — including street youth, anti-poverty and social housing activists, anarchists and other individuals — occupied an abandoned historic site, the Lafontaine building on Overdale Avenue in Montreal. In an attempt to move the squatters out of the downtown area, Mayor Pierre Bourque's office decided to offer a more remote space in the East End. On August 2nd, another large city-owned building was accepted by the squatters under their own conditions — which includes an amnesty from criminal charges, the assumption of all costs by the City, as well as collective self-management.

The new building, known formerly as the "Centre d'Accueil Rachel," was a youth rehabilitation center abandoned since 1997. Straddling the Rosemont and Hochelaga-Maisonneuve neighborhoods of Montreal, it's located at 3100 Rachel Street East, at the corner of Prefontaine. The mayor's willingness to cede the building is undoubtedly related to the upcoming city election in early November. Looking at the building and the surrounding area, squatters were talking about creating office spaces for radical activist groups, a kitchen for Food Not Bombs, a garden project, library, free school, meeting spaces, media room and, of course, accessible social housing. [cribbed from an article by Jaggi Singh 02/08/01 for montreal.indymedia.org]

16 SMALL BOAT REPAIR YARD

Small industries like this boat repair yard are currently scattered across the Portlands. They will be forced to move as property values increase, and their current locations are no longer profitable. The movement of downtown industries to the suburbs allows residents to imagine that they live in a post-industrial world, intensifying the class distinctions that have always been made between blue and white-collar work. This new form of urban segregation is another way in which the city is organized to exercise control over its inhabitants.

Small industries are part of the historical use of the Portlands. Their inclusion in future development plans might allow a more interesting multi-use neighborhood, but it would also help to retain the memory of the working history of the site, in the face of current forms of amnesia that pretend to preserve the form of the city while they violently writing over existing programs. These small industries could encourage new adjacent creative and productive uses, as they have in many transitional industrial areas in Toronto and around the world.

17 COMMUNITY GARDENS

"Toronto now boasts over 90 community gardens, plus the 20 municipal allotment gardens. The total number of individual plots probably totals well over 4500. Community gardens come in many different shapes and sizes. They can be large or small, on the ground or on rooftops, in plots or in planters. They don't have to be "communal" either, where everyone shares the work and the harvest. Gardeners can have their own individual plot within the community garden and can also join with others to grow some crops communally. For instance, if every gardener had 5 or 6 corn plants in their plot, the tall corn from one plot would shade neighbouring plots. By planting corn communally in one large plot this problem is solved and the corn will actually grow better because it needs to be planted in a "block" for better pollination." [foodshare.net]

18 BIRD SANCTUARY

The inventory of wildlife found on the Leslie Street Spit includes 290 bird species, 17 mammal species, 7 species of reptiles and amphibians and a large variety of fish species. Various studies conducted by the Metropolitan Toronto Region Conservation Authority (MTRCA), the Canadian Wildlife Service, local naturalists and a number of interest groups have determined that the Spit is a significant nesting and staging area for birds. It is also one of the most important components of one of metro region's major migrational corridors for bird species. Five species of colonial water birds, including Ring-Billed Gulls, Herring Gulls, Common Tern, Black-Crowned Night Heron and Double-Crested Cormorant, currently nest at the spit in large numbers. [(MTRCA, 1992 and MTRCA, 1994) ryerson.ca/vtoronto/wwwsite/themes/cultrec/html/spit.htm]

SEVENTH FIRE GATHERING at QUEENS PARK - TORONTO 4PM SEPT 27th-29th

20 ONTARIO COALITION AGAINST POVERTY

OCAP is a poor persons' organization, primarily based in Toronto and made up of working, unemployed, and homeless people. OCAP struggles to put forward a simple political case: everyone in society deserves to be treated with fundamental respect and honour. Native people must have their land, working people must be paid a decent wage, unemployed people must be given benefits that will let them survive with dignity, and homeless people must be given housing — all without exception. We are a political organization of the poor whose goal it is to secure a just society, a society that does not allow people to sleep and die in the streets, and that does not allow the police to target people of colour and the poor, and does not allow vast segments of the population to live in grinding misery. [www.ocap.ca]

OCAP organizers have developed good connections with many of the First Nations people adversely affected by the Ontario government. One outcome of these conversations was the Seventh Fire Gathering, held September 27 - 29, 2001.

Listening Material: "Democracy When?"

and an art practice of organizing

by Ultra-red

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!No demolicion; desarrollos Sostenibles!

"Desarrollos Sostenibles: Sustainable Developments"
Ultra-red CD Release Event and Political Action
Junio 1, 3:00pm - 6:00pm
DJ Hoseh
Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions
6522 Hollywood Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90028
T: 323.957.1777

Ultra-red
Union de Vecinos
Beta Bodega Coalition
Green Galactic
www.greengalactic.com/323-466-5141
In cooperation with the Democracy When? exhibit.

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TO THE PUBLIC

Ultra-red ephemera, PL3X/Beta Bodega Coalition.

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Listening Material: "Democracy When?"

and an art practice of organizing

by Ultra-red

In May 2002, Ultra-red was asked to participate in the group exhibit "Democracy When? Activist Strategizing in Los Angeles." Curated by Tone O. Nielsen at the artists' space LACE in Hollywood, the exhibit brought together thirty-five LA artists and activists who approach their work as social intervention.

In her introduction to the exhibit catalog, Nielsen described "Democracy When?" as a "collective think-tank for the exchange and rethinking of activist strategies and practices." Although charged with curating the show, Nielsen set up a series of forums, inviting the artists to collectively negotiate the exhibit's curatorial problematics. Early in this process, the members of Ultra-red noted a collapse of the terms activism and organizing.

While for most of the artists the fundamental issue for the exhibit was the history and practice of democracy, for Ultra-red the specificity of activism and organizing was a crucial matter for investigation. Pursuit of such a clarification, we contended, would prove useful in articulating a means for judging both the methods and the efficacy of artistic practice as political action.

"It's crucial as we assess our own practices that we clearly understand the terms of our engagement," we wrote in the our contribution to the catalog. "Collapsing terms such as activism and organizing obscures the distinct ways in which artists as social agents understand their relationship to social movements.

"Whereas activism constitutes itself through typically short-term campaigns or actions, organizing is generally distinguished by a sense of accountability to a community. The accountability which connects the organizer to a community often develops over years of exchange and a long-term analysis of building a movement at the grass-roots level.

"These terms, activist and organizer, are by no means mutually exclusive. Often a community organizer will take on an activist capacity in regards to specific campaigns or actions. Conversely, as in the case of the politically engaged artist, an individual may see themselves as an activist in how they drift from campaign to campaign. At the same time, that individual may have a relationship to a community — namely, for the artist, an art's community — that may be characterized as organizing.

"The significance of this distinction, especially in the context of politically engaged art practice, is in defining 'to whom is the artist accountable?' And, more importantly, from what perspective does the artist develop her political analysis: through a sustained and direct engagement with communities in struggle or through an autonomous artistic milieu?"

Perhaps overly simplistic in articulation, the statement did little to engender any significant debate on the implications of such a distinction for the practice of political art. Nonetheless, as a first step, these words did help shape Ultra-red's consideration of how we would participate in "Democracy When?"

column

Opting against installing representations visual or otherwise, Ultra-red decided to limit our participation to something along the lines of a performance. Since 1997, Ultra-red has enjoyed an especially fruitful relationship with the organization of public-housing residents, Union de Vecinos. Founded in 1995, the Union de Vecinos began with thirty households in the East Los Angeles projects of Pico Aliso. Committed to resisting the Housing Authority's announced gentrification plans, the Union de Vecinos eventually spanned three projects, each slated for demolition. Two organizers with the Union de Vecinos served as hosts for Ultra-red's first forays into the projects. In time, the struggles of the residents would profoundly shape Ultra-red's thinking about public space, urban planning and the relationship between democracy and the neoliberal order. Furthermore, the two organizers in Pico Aliso would in 2000 become full-fledged members of Ultra-red.

Our performance at LACE figured within a long and sustained engagement with the communities of the Union de Vecinos and their ongoing efforts to democratize housing policy. On June 1, Ultra-red staged a pseudo-record release party for the CD "Desarrollos Sostenibles (Sustainable Developments)." Released on the Miami electronic-music label Beta Bodega Coalition, the CD is a compilation of remixes from Ultra-red's previous public-housing-themed album "Structural Adjustments" (Mille Plateaux, Frankfurt, Germany, 2000).

While the LACE event did offer the audience a chance to hear the tracks on the CD, the centerpiece of the performance was an appearance by a dozen women of the Union de Vecinos. After all had a chance to enjoy the food provided, walk through the exhibits and audition the music, the residents gathered to reflect publicly on the status of their struggle. The women discussed the beginnings of the Union, their fight for housing guarantees during the demolition and redevelopment of the projects Pico Gardens, Pico and Aliso Extensions, and Aliso Village. They closed the presentation discussing the next phase of struggle as the city Housing Authority planned to demolish five more public-housing communities across the city.

After the residents thanked the audience for their support, the DJ resumed the music, this time playing salsa, ranchero and popular corridos. The atmosphere shifted from reflective and sober to celebratory.

As anticipated, the audience was divided over the artistic merits of the event. One visitor, wincing from the high-pitched frequencies of processed recordings of bulldozers, asked a member of Ultra-red if we actually liked this type of music. The artist responded, "This *is* our music." Other visitors were far less concerned with aesthetic value. Alerted to the nature of the event, a group of neighbors from San Diego drove the two hours to LACE to make a plea for solidarity as they faced similar threats of bulldozers and urban gentrification. The city planners had deemed their barrio perfect real estate for a new sports stadium.

For Ultra-red and the Union de Vecinos, the performance afforded artists and residents the opportunity to reflect upon their practice in the company of an audience. In essence, it was this process of reflection that constituted the performance itself. The residents recalling their history in the sounds of Ultra-red's tracks, the conversations private and public and the context of an arts institution all contributed to a production of knowledge based in community, experience and affect.

Framed by an exhibit dedicated to activist strategizing, Ultra-red's pseudo-record release party posed a different paradigm for artistic engagement. Within Ultra-red, the value of such a difference depended upon our own individual allegiances. This multivalence internal to Ultra-red came out during subsequent evaluations of the exhibit and our participation. For one organizer with the Union de Vecinos, the primary purpose surrounding our involvement in "Democracy When?" remained community organizing. That an art practice born from specific knowledge of organizing offered an alternative to the limits of activist art was far less compelling a matter than the dialectic of artistic practice and community organizing itself.

"I see socially engaged art as an additional tool for organizing," she declared. "That process starts with the group or community you are working in. It also has to be a product of the organizing and not an additional task that is not connected to a larger strategy. It is not about an artist or a group of artists who want to develop an art project based on a specific theme for social change in which all the energy is centered on the development of the art project. It is, however, about the artists simply being a tool or vehicle for expression of an ongoing community struggle. It is to enhance and build upon the organizing strategies in which the community is part of the development."

An instrumentalist notion of art struck another member of Ultra-red as limiting. "I would argue that what Ultra-red does is not, in fact, simply a tool for expressing a community in struggle. Rather, our own subjectivity as artists/organizers is much more prominent in the process than simply as empty vehicles for someone else's expression (i.e., the community's). For example, in the project we did for LACE there existed several components: the event itself, the "Stop Demolition" poster, the CD, the DJ, the food. While we as artists made sure the experience and struggle of the Union were at the center, were we merely tools of that struggle? What about our own choices, discussions, relationships, artistic and aesthetic interests?

"I'm resistant to the idea that we're vacant, disinterested, subject-less, objectified means of mediating someone else's interests. I'm wondering if we have more agency in the process. Is it detrimental to the organizing if we do?"

The Union de Vecinos organizer responded: "What I am trying to get at is that we as artists do not come into the process with an agenda. That the artwork or project we produce is directed by the organizing efforts and how it benefits that struggle. Of course as artists we have our own opinions or suggestions that contribute to the process. In all our engagements with public-housing, from the exhibits, bus tours, performances, public occupations and so on, the organizing work directed the projects.

This is in contrast to the work dictated by the artist's personal agendas or representations.

"Having said this," she continued, "I recognize that we ourselves have not always followed that same process. Some of Ultra-red's work does center around our own representation of a particular struggle rather than working on a deeper level with the communities involved. In the case of the latter, we occupy the role of artist-activists."

"What we do and how we do it is very connected to the struggles that we participate in. Whether it is public-housing, queer labour, education and so on." At this point the other organizer with Union de Vecinos entered the discussion. He was not satisfied with characterizing Ultra-red's other work as activist. For him, such a characterization failed to acknowledge the collective nature of the group as well as the fact that while not all members may have direct connection with a community, those connections are still grounded in the external accountability of at least one member. For example, not everyone in Ultra-red works as an organizer with the Union de Vecinos. However, the artwork produced in relationship to the public-housing residents draws on those personal relationships that do exist within the group.

"All of us are organizers engaged in some struggle here in Los Angeles. Part of our critique of art practice has to do with the role that art plays at the levels of the social, political, economic and ideological. As artists ourselves, I would say that we are very self-conscious about the role we perform in the world of social change. Call it instrumental or not, that impact is undeniable. The question is what is the relationship between the artist and the struggle being represented and/or reflected upon.

"I think we have collectively resisted the notion of an activist artist who walks into a neighborhood, social group or struggle and makes a controversial work — then walks away leaving others to deal with the consequences. Collectively, Ultra-red could not do that because up until now everything we have done is connected to a relationship in that struggle. There

are consequences for what we do. Consequences for us and for our partners. Consequences for us collectively, for us as a group and across the different communities we bring into this space called Ultra-red."

A fourth voice entered the conversation. This person, an associate of Ultra-red, works with the anti-militarism organization California Peace Action, but assisted in the organizing of the LACE performance. "I quite like this idea of a collectively produced space, where the external commitments of individuals inform and constitute a collective subjectivity," he mused. "Therefore, it may actually make sense to talk about Ultra-red's work from a spatial perspective. One of the notions that, at least in part, informed the action at LACE had very much to do with the construction and uses of space. From a detached point of view the resident action at the gallery raised tensions relating to anxieties over what is and is not art, as well as issues of race and class.

"Viewed differently, however, the performance was conceived as serving the strategic organizing interests of the residents and other considerations were secondary." Here he nodded to the first Union de Vecinos organizer. "It was interesting to watch us move between these modes of thinking as we prepared for the event, a somewhat schizoid cohabitation, which seems rather healthy to me if you are inclined to believe, as I am, that the relation between these two spheres, art and organizing, cannot be theorized.

"In art generally there is no outside questions about form. For example, years ago working in the field of poetry, I studied many writers of the 'avant-garde' who took on historical questions of form. To my great frustrations, the poetry produced by these writers was so abstruse and inaccessible that you needed an advanced degree to be remotely interested in it. On the other hand, the emergence of popular forms, such as 'slam poetry,' privilege content and largely ignore formal questions and problematics in the historical sense. Yet the writing is widely accessible. I think that Ultra-red's privileging of affect over content allows formal

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interrogation to move forward in a way that is more accessible. Accessible because it is tangible and experiential."

But something in his resistance to theory disconcerted another member of Ultra-red. "If the relationship between art and organizing cannot be theorized, what then is the function of reflection? Obviously in the tradition of popular education, which informs most of what Ultra-red understands as organizing, reflection is essential to action. Is this different from Lukács' notion (along with most Western Marxists) of praxis as theory combined with practice, that is, theory as socially productive?"

The anti-militarism organizer responded: "I agree with Freire that liberatory action and thought must bring action and reflection into dialog. I would be inclined to support the further distinction you make between theory and reflection. It seems to me that the theoretical enterprise is structurally opposed or at least resistant to the process of experiential reflection. To be fair, I think that the same might be said of the realm of action, at least from my perspective in relation to my experience as an organizer. In the context of much of what passes as either organizing or activism there is very little space for any sort of 'reflection' that is critical in any paradigmatic or structural way.

"I think that theory's impoverishment — like the impoverishment of much political action — is symptomatic of our historical moment. A more productive characterization of Ultra-red's work is that as a practice it is precarious, contingent and given to reflection. As such, the work produces a space that does not exist and can neither be thought into existence. Nor can it exhibit or otherwise manifest an inherent logic or structure (that would allow it to think us into existence). I think that it relates back to what I was saying earlier about theory in that the conditions (or space) in which the relevant theory might be conceived does not exist. That, effectively, each of our actions — whether an event like that at LACE, or our radio broadcasts, performances, etc. — help produce the space from which we might reflect on them."

Here, one of the organizers with the Union de Vecinos remembered a conversation from earlier in the week: "The other day I was talking to a friend from El Salvador. He told me, '*Estas gentes no saben como trabajar la mara. Lo unico que hacen es invitarlas a mitines y entrenamientos. Si yo estubiera empezando mi trabajo organizativo aquí me la pasaria jugando soccer con estas gentes.*' These American organizers don't know how to work with people. The only thing they do is invite people to rallies and workshops. If I were starting my organizing work here I would be playing soccer in the community."

"One of the functions of an organizing art, regardless the community with which we are working collectively or individually, is this space. Popular education tells us that reflection upon our experience is essential for strategizing. When we meet as a group, develop sound recordings, performances and so on, there is a self-referential aspect. We, organizers each of us, are reflecting on the work that we do on an everyday basis. In this space, we are organizers of Ultra-red, both its constituents and its authors. That this work necessitates interrelationships with other bodies and knowledges beyond our own membership demonstrates the profound interdependence of social-justice movements. That the struggle for just public-housing policy intersects with that fight against neoliberal globalization which intersects with labour rights which intersects with a materialist queer liberation.

"If no theory exists to articulate such a network, then that is because the network is still to come, is in process. Just as the community we desire is still to come into our midst. We listen for it. Making sense of the sounds that just the day before we heard as noise. Or silence."

Nearly a year later, Ultra-red has continued its engagement with the Union de Vecinos. While the residents gear up for the fight against more demolitions, Ultra-red has been invited to spend time with the Ballymun public-housing community in Dublin, Ireland. That community faces a similar demolition and rebuild plan.

A residual effect of Ballymun's regeneration was the formation of the community arts organization Breaking Ground. Funded by one percent of monies from the regeneration, Breaking Ground invited roughly two-dozen artists to develop public artworks and community arts programming directly within the 20,000-resident Ballymun community. By inviting Ultra-red to develop public art work in the projects, the organizers of Breaking Ground were taking a bold step working with an artists' group that has historically been hostile to regeneration schemes, at least as they have been constituted in the United States. Conversely, Ultra-red and its allies in the Union de Vecinos were keenly aware of the potential for cooptation in accepting such a commission.

Nonetheless, out of a profound commitment to the promises of public-housing, Ultra-red accepted the invitation, balancing their own scepticism with a deep desire for best practices in the building and administration of public-housing communities.

Walking the broken landscape of Ballymun, it's a long distance from that noisy storefront on Hollywood Boulevard to this eternal construction zone. But what seems to function as an ongoing problematic for Ultra-red's work has been the production of acoustic spaces for reflection. In fact, the constancy of that practice suggests not the privileging of spatial practices over the temporal but rather their dialectical engagement. In fact, going back to the original statement written for the "Democracy When?" catalog, we recall that a distinctive feature of organizing is its temporality.

Herein lies the fundamental limitation on most of what operates under the rubric as political art, or activist art. Even in the mandate for "Democracy When?" its capacity to function as a think-tank was greatly impeded by the temporary nature of the exhibition itself. In recent years, the temporariness of art spaces and events has been celebrated as a way of slipping out from under the narrative of cooptation. The temporarily autonomous space gives performance to liberatory experi-
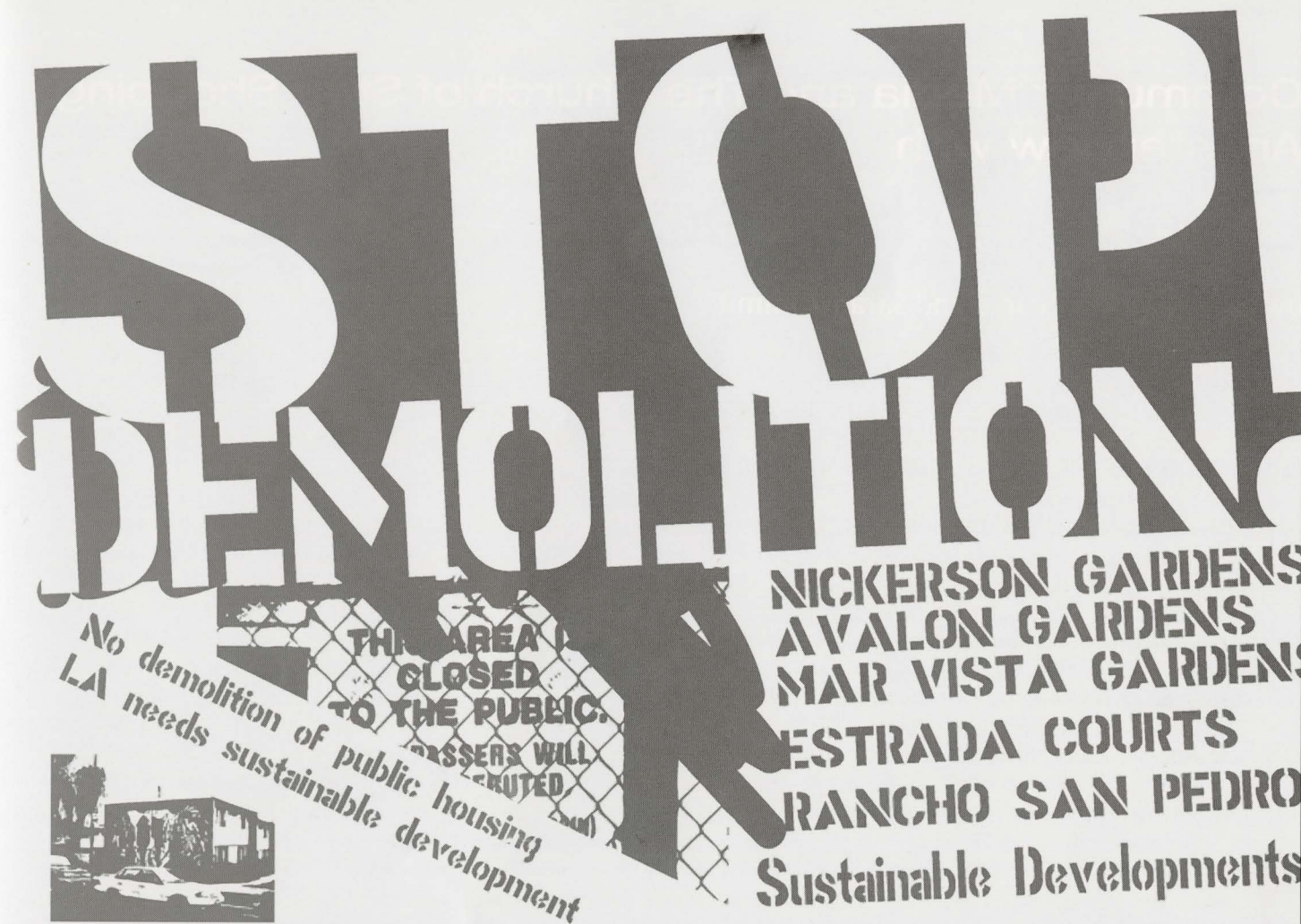
Ultra-red ephemera, PL3X/Beta Bodega Coalition.

ences in their fullness, prior to and in opposition to the codification of those experiences within capitalist exchange.

Yet in the labour of organizing communities, destroying power and mobilizing progressive transformation, one requires a long-term strategy. Otherwise, there is no memory, no relations available to transform and no sustained engagement with material conditions. One effect of that absence is that our conversations and debates remain stunted. An exhibit like "Democracy When?" can appear (and then disappear) within a space that has already previously taken up the same problematics in times past. The artists' space LACE was itself born

out of precisely these same sort of encounters over twenty-five years ago. But no mention was made of this history, let alone of the conclusions from those encounters. Our glorious temporariness condemns us to permanent amnesia in regards to the social value of art practice.

This fate underscores the crucial importance of accountability as a means of overcoming an alienated artistic milieu. Our tactics may embrace temporary zones, visual, acoustic and tactile as a means of producing reflective and experiential spaces. Those tactics must be embedded within social relations knit together by a connection to everyday life — whether that be the commons of public-housing, sexual

or gendered citizenship, indiguous memory, immigrant resistance, working-class valourization or any other community constituted through struggle. Otherwise the answer to our question "When?" will forever be deferred in terms of social practice and material change.

column

Community Media and The Church of Stop Shopping:
An Interview with
Dee Dee Halleck

by Sarah Sharkey Pearce and Sarah Zammit

Dee Dee Halleck is a media activist, educator and film-maker. In 1961, she started CHILDREN MAKE MOVIES, *a workshop in New York where kids were given access to 16mm film. A co-founder of Paper Tiger* TV, *Deep Dish satellite network and Free Speech* TV *media collectives, she currently works on Democracy* NOW!, *a Colorado internet radio show that features critical and alternative news media. She recently published the book*

Hand Held Visions: The Impossible Possibilities of Community Media, a collection of essays, presentations and lectures written for and about community media over the past forty years.

In November, Halleck was in Toronto teaching a media and democracy course as artist-in-residence with the Centre for Media and Culture in Education (CMCE) at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). Through email correspondence, we caught up with Dee Dee in South Africa to discuss her visit to Toronto and her work as a media activist. This virtual dialogue explores some of the complexities involved in working to create and sustain a global media activist movement

Sarah Zammit and Sarah Sharkey Pearce: You've been a media activist for over forty years now. Can you take us back to some of your formative influences?

Dee Dee Halleck: When I was a high school student, I lived in Tennessee near the Highland Folk School founded by Miles Horton and modeled after adult-education centers in Scandinavia. In the 1950s that center became a sort of activist boot camp: a place where people could talk, work and support each other in the battle for civil rights. In fact, Rosa Parks went to a Highlander workshop a few weeks before she took her historic stand not to move to the back of the bus in Montgomery, Alabama. I've always tried to recreate the sort of space and atmosphere that prevailed at Highlander — to encourage people to speak for themselves so that they can realize the strengths and creativity they already possess, to encourage them to try to address both local and global social issues collectively. My role oscillates between being a puttering hostess/mom and a cattle prod.

SZ/SSP: How would you say this oscillation of roles played out during your involvement with creating the "Paper Tiger" show in Toronto with OCAP? How was that organized and where did the show end up?

DDH: Several students from OCAD and faculty member Rebecca Garrett expressed interest in making a Paper Tiger program while I was in Toronto this past November. We discussed the possibility of doing a substantive critique of John Grierson, the founder of the National Film Board of Canada, who is often referred to as the "father of documentary." The idea was to juxtapose his approach with that of Toronto's own filmmaker star, John Greyson. When I told some people in the US that I was coming to Toronto and the only person I knew there was John Greyson, many people said, "Oh, I have his book," or, "Oh, I thought he was dead...," thinking I was talking about Grierson, and/or conflating the two. John [Greyson] said that often happens.

Yet, it was hard to get OCAD students interested in Grierson, many of whom had never heard of him. We chose instead to work with Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (www.ocap.ca), with whom Rebecca Garrett had previously made "Safe Park," about the takeover of a Toronto public park by homeless. Some of the
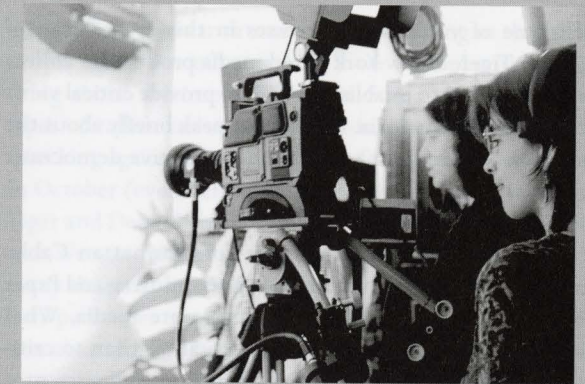
OISE/UT students turned up with the OCAD crew and we brought John Clark, an activist with OCAP, into the OCAD studio. Clark has been accused of a pretty serious crime, inciting to riot (mostly for organizing and mobilizing people to protest) and is expecting to be tried in February 2003.[1] We thought a tape about his work would be especially timely and appropriate. In homage to John Grierson/Greyson and our original interests, the tape starts with a little in-joke. We borrow a quotation from a documentary about Grierson, in which he says that television isn't appropriate for "hard" news, but is a cozy medium. We put that phrase on a television set in a cozy living room with John Greyson sipping tea and falling asleep.

SZ/SSP: This is a good example of how your documentary work has an activist interest. Can you tell us about your latest documentary in this regard?

DDH: I have just finished a documentary entitled "Ah! The Hopeful Pageantry of Bread and Puppet." The film is co-directed by Tamar Schumann, who is the daughter of founder Peter Schumann. Bread and Puppet was very influential in the formation of Paper Tiger and I have worked for several years as their "official documentary maker." Their theater productions are brilliant examples of cheap, accessible, activist media, created and supported by people with a dynamic, energetic and collective spirit. It is this combination that I always hoped for Paper Tiger and Deep Dish. And, it is what excited me about those Highlander workshops in the 1950s.

interview

SZ/SSP: One of your early successes in this regard was, of course, Paper Tiger, a New York-based media production collective that you worked to establish in 1981, to provide critical views of print and electronic media. Could you speak briefly about the process used at Paper Tiger to make the collective democratic and accessible?

DDH: Paper Tiger[2] is a local program for Manhattan Cable. Manhattan is the center of the information industry and Paper Tiger was initiated to demystify the corporate media. What could be more appropriate to the local situation than to critically examine the local media as industry? Each program provided an "expert" to critique a different medium: "Herb Schiller Reads the New York Times" was the first of what are now over three hundred programs.

Paper Tiger emerged from the public access movement.[3] We created the show to be an appropriate format for live, low-budget television programming that could be adapted by a wide range of local community groups: a simple structure, open to creative input, with high content level.

SZ/SSP: How did the collective approach the making of each production?

DDH: Most of these programs were done live. A member of the collective would choose a subject and invite others to work on it with them. The work involved ranged from research (for example, we often included statistics about a corporation or information about a board of directors), to preparing a backdrop and props for the set, to contacting and coaching the "expert." We would all meet at the studio literally minutes from when we went on air. It was quite spontaneous and exhilarating, especially for those of us who had spent years raising funds, shooting and editing for just one documentary — and even then not knowing if anyone would ever see it! Here was instant media, with an instant audience. Our adrenaline levels were high: we were making live TV every week.

SZ/SSP: The momentum and excitement that access to production created for those making a new public media bring to mind the public it aims to represent. How did the Paper Tiger collective work to ensure the participation of people excluded

from mainstream and marginal media productions, both in front of the camera and behind, as well as in organizational and decision-making roles?

DDH: We recognized that there were two central issues of exclusion and marginalization that needed to be addressed: one at the level of representation (who was included) and the other at the level of ideas (what was said). None of the "experts" we used were people whose voices could be readily found in mainstream media. Intellectuals in general are excluded from the mass media and our expert intellectuals were all dissidents — hence doubly excluded. In looking back over our list of "experts," I think we did a pretty good job of identifying important leaders who needed to be heard, a significant proportion of whom were people of colour. Many have now passed away and our tapes are important archival portraits of these thinkers and activists. I am thinking, for example, of Conrad Lynn, civil rights attorney; Archie Singham, a leader of the Non-Aligned Movement; Stanley Diamond, Marxist anthropologist; Flo Kennedy, black lawyer and pioneer feminist; William Kunstler, radical lawyer; and Herb Schiller, radical social scientist and communication expert.

Behind the camera too, there have been many collective members of a variety of ethnic and racial backgrounds. One of the strategies has been to work with and train young people of colour as part of the collective, so Paper Tiger has been a crucial training ground for literally hundreds of media activists. Because of this, we've always been able to attract new and devoted members — especially young people eager to have hands on media experience.

SZ/SSP: In the changing fiscal climate, how has Paper Tiger survived? Have these changes forced changes in programming or approach for example?

DDH: We seen shifts in funders' priorities over the years; currently, for example, there is money available for "keeping kids off the streets" from liberal foundations (MacArthur, Soros, Rockefeller). So there's been a corresponding emphasis on training workshops for youth, especially youth of colour. The Paper Tiger workshops have also produced important projects with gay and lesbian youth of colour and youth in homeless shelters. One of the effects of this is that the influence of the collective has been more

local, often targeting very specific communities, such as transgender youth. It is a lot harder to get funds for critiquing the mainstream media as an industry.

SZ/SSP: How have these shifts to a focus on supporting particular identity-based groups impacted on the broader interest in media activism?

DDH: The focus of the collective is still on media activism, critiquing mainstream media and using media to mobilize and inform. In the case of "Homecoming Queens" and "Fenced Out" (both of which focus on gay, lesbian and transgender youth), the tapes were made for very specific situations. "Homecoming Queens" is about a shelter for youth that was not being properly maintained by the city. "Fenced Out" is about the closing of the pier in the West Village (NYC) where queer youth would congregate in the evenings. The tapes were made as part of broader activist struggles and they were shown at community meetings and forums organized to address these issues. In addition both the tapes have been screened extensively at queer film festivals and, as a result of that exposure, have been used in other communities facing similar problems.

By working on and exhibiting the tapes, the youth involved have opportunities to see experimental forms of film and video that are not available on network TV or at the theaters in their neighborhoods. One of the great things, for example, about having these workshop tapes at the MIX (Experimental Gay and Lesbian) Festival in NYC is that the young producers got to see many other tapes in the festival, and hang out and meet other filmmakers. Some of their parents came to the MIX screenings — a real boost for both the kids and their families.

SZ/SSP: An earlier example of Paper Tiger's work challenging the relevance of existing media frameworks was the 1991 series entitled "The Gulf War Television Project" (GWTVP). Could you describe the GWTVP and speak to the social conditions under which it was conceived? What was the project's intent? Was there a particular audience in mind and what kinds of effects did the screenings have?

DDH: By 1990, Deep Dish had been able to pull together a community of activist media makers from around the country and over two hundred channels willing to cablecast our program-

ming. When the war drums started pounding in the fall of 1990, people called our offices asking if we were planning to do anything about the impending crisis. Some even sent unsolicited tapes of rallies and activist teach-ins. My sense is people were marching against the war, but were feeling isolated and impotent. In October (even before the bombing campaign started), Paper Tiger and Deep Dish decided to collaborate on a series about the war. We sent out a call for tapes, receiving several hundred from many different locations across the country. We put together a four-part series on everything from the history of oil to information about how to become a conscientious objector, punctuated by scenes from the many local demonstrations against the war. The series included interviews with Edward Said, Palestinian activist/theorist, and Daniel Elsberg, who had uncovered the Pentagon Papers during the Vietnam War. GWTVP worked with FAIR (Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting, a media watchdog organization) to analyze the mainstream media's portrayal of the Iraqi "threat."

The programs were shown on television and in activist meetings not only in the US, but also in Japan, Brazil, Korea and Europe. In Japan, these testimonies were transcribed and posted on the Internet and became an important document in the discussions of the war within the Japanese government. Channel Four in London purchased the first four programs, allowing us to make six more, so the entire series was ten half-hour shows. Many stations are now re-running that series, as they remain relevant to the current situation.

SZ/SSP: We would like to ask you if Paper Tiger has planned a media response to the "War on Iraq" but we will get to that later. First, let's take a step back in order to understand the infrastructure needed to provide such reportage. By 1986, Paper Tiger television had been broadcasting for five years and was clearly successful in the ways you've already described. At that point, you decided to establish Deep Dish, a national satellite network allowing for wider programming potential. This is a logical progression, and an important attempt to create an independent media structure to challenge existing information networks in the US. Can you describe the ways in which Deep Dish gains access to this network?

DDH: Deep Dish (www.deepdishtv.org) was initiated to share programming between independent producers and access centers;
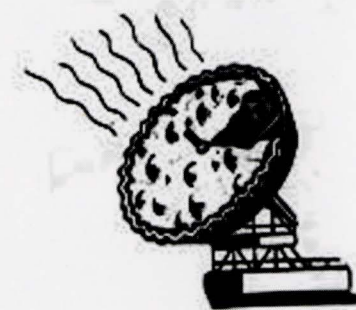
we leased transponder time on commercial satellites and sent programs out to a growing network of community channels. Since its beginning in 1986, Deep Dish has featured work that questions foreign policy and US domestic productions by people of colour, independent producers and disenfranchised communities. Many of the programs were first produced for public-access cable or local activist organizations.

In recent years, Deep Dish has produced several series on prisons: "Bars and Stripes," "Lock Down USA" and "America Behind Bars." In some inner city areas, over one third of the male population between seventeen and thirty are in prison, on parole or awaiting sentencing. Two million US citizens are now behind bars — a figure unmatched in the world. The mass media have been complicit in creating a culture of fear that fosters the growth of what has become a significant income generating sector of US industry, sometimes called the Prison Industrial Complex. There is very little questioning of this phenomenon within mainstream media. The Deep Dish tapes have been used extensively for local organizing efforts to place moratoriums on prison construction and the death penalty. Shortly before 9/11, the prison population began a slight decline for the first time in decades and the stock market values for prison corporations were sharply down. These stocks have risen sharply, however, since the World Trade Center attacks. There has been a feeding frenzy for the billions of dollars now available for new purchases of everything from handcuffs to stun guns, and the prison construction industry is back in full swing. Deep Dish is currently planning a new series on the rise in repression and the prison industry post 9/11.

SZ/SSP: Reporting alternative views, such as the rise in prison stocks since 9/11, that trouble mainstream representations of the social state in the US often appears to be a production mandate for Paper Tiger and Deep Dish. What role does Free Speech TV play in transmitting this information?

DDH: In the late 1990s, a group of us involved with the Instructional Telecommunications Foundation in Boulder, Colorado began to lobby for a "set-aside" of public-interest programming on Direct Broadcast Satellite (DBS). We were successful; all DBS providers are now required to have four percent of their channels available for non-commercial public interest

programming. We applied for access to one of those channels and now have a twenty-four-hour network called Free Speech Television. This channel runs the Deep Dish programming, so Deep Dish no longer has to lease commercial satellite time. This channel carries other progressive documentaries and cultural shows around the clock, every day. This sustained presence of alternative voices is a tremendous opportunity for progressive voices in the US.

SZ/SSP: How does this move towards a larger infrastructure of distribution impact on the production of radical work?

DDH: The resource of Free Speech TV is an opportunity not yet fully utilized. In the future, we can build audiences and have more impact than we currently do. I do not mean that we need to make our "production values" higher. That seems to be quite a red herring that the mainstream throws out to keep radical media out. Some of the most respected and avidly watched media have been the live reports that Democracy Now! broadcast from the World Social Forum in Porto Allegre (www.democracynow.org), the inauguration of the country of East Timor and the Anti-Racism Conference in Durban. Three segments may have had low resolution, but they were completely fascinating, informative and far in excess of the two-second cynicism of the CNN reports. In fact, no

other live reports were produced from these events from a non-corporate perspective.

I think we can provide this sort of coverage of global events in a way that will build audiences and activism. But we also need to address people's emotional and cultural needs. The appeal of much activist media is limited, especially the variety that features haranguing from a podium interspersed with endless shots of people marching and chanting. We need to make telenovellas, music programs, comedy shows and drama. I am working with Reverend Billy, an anti-consumer culturejammer of the "Church of Stop Shopping" to try a progressive form of televangelism. We need to study the successful television genres, make our own adaptations and invent our own forms. RtMark has made a considerable impact with audiences who do not necessarily identify as "leftists" through use of parody and humor, as has Michael Moore. There should be more collaboration with art students, actors and puppeteers. Television has never been developed to its full potential. Using radio, the Internet and satellite television, and working with a very low budget, Democracy Now! shows us the possibility of a hybrid network. We can experiment with and evolve a new form of interactive media, one that is beyond video games and punching in credit-card numbers. The question before us is: Can we make television that is more in touch with the realities of life in this world — the growing gap between rich and poor, the sense of alienation and helplessness in youth, the environmental devastation? These "realities" are not being portrayed in the mass media.

SZ/SSP: This raises another series of questions for us about viewers. How important is the relationship between audience and producer? How do you approach the discussion about intended audience and what work would speak to them?

DDH: Programs of Paper Tiger, Deep Dish and Free Speech TV are a regular, sustained presence on television in most major US cities. There are several ways an audience might engage these programs. There are the channel hoppers, who chance upon the programming via their remote control. For some viewers, this may be the first time they have ever heard a different take on the world. This is a very different audience from those who would come to an art gallery or a cinemateque and choose to see a documentary or an

experimental work. There are also those who see the programs when they are taped by teachers and community activists and shown on VCRs in classrooms and meeting halls. We have received many letters from these sorts of activists who use the tapes in their work. Other audiences are generated through regular producers at the local-access channels who get involved in making local additions to the national programming that we send out. This sort of thing happened with the Gulf Crisis TV Project and with the programming that Deep Dish has done on prisons. Local activists have used the programs as jumping off points for making their own interventions: having local activists on, taking call-ins and commenting on the programming.

Much of this is about strategy and how to reach and engage people who feel a disconnection from activism and political engagement. Do we need to strategize about what people are looking for when they go from one channel to another? Should we concern ourselves with trying to provide an escape from the reality of their work and problems, or try to awaken in them a more active and productive way of living their lives? Or should we question the entire apparatus of television and programming emanating from a central source?

SZ/SSP: Given your history of work as a media activist, which strategies do you feel have been most effective and why?

DDH: No one strategy will cover every situation. For us in the United States, public-access channels have been an important resource — not necessarily because of specific programming, but because they are so obviously *not* made for the same reasons as corporate media. When channel zappers come upon them, they are seeing something different. The juxtaposition of access programming within the dial is itself a challenge to the system of commercial media, in a much more emphatic and essential way than PBS, the so-called "public television" that serves the interests of sponsors and the government. In a recent newspaper survey from the cities of Dayton and Cincinnati, Ohio, respondents overwhelming voted for public access as the best of local TV, over all the commercial and PBS stations.

Within our borders, perhaps the greatest impact in the past few years has been the micro radio movement. This has grown out of

work by Japanese pioneer, Tetsuo Kogawa, and Berkeley Free Speech Radio activist Stephen Dunnifer, and led to the transmission of literally thousands of small, unlicensed radio stations with limited broadcasting radius and maximum local input. The proliferation of micro radio has forced the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to change their regulations to allow for special "micro radio" licenses.

SZ/SSP: It's interesting that in a time when activist efforts focus on global networks of resistance, you cite a "micro-movement" as being one of the most effective in the US. Why is this?

DDH: It connotes a significant change of attitude toward electronic technology. The airwaves belong to the people! For the first time since the early days of radio, people are actually taking radio transmission into their own hands — neither obtaining the proper license nor getting caught up in any costly bureaucratic infrastructure. It's sort of a spectrum squatters' movement. And like the Pope Squat (actions by the homeless in Toronto during the Pope's visit), its significance goes beyond that action, as a questioning of decades of policy, regulation and the status quo. It's an appropriation of what is rightfully ours. It makes people realize that yes, the airwaves do belong to everyone and it questions all corporate and government transmissions by example — not by rhetoric.

SZ/SSP: This brings us back to the question of different strategies and reaching audiences differently. Can you say more about that?

DDH: Paper Tiger programs use all kinds of strategies: the seductive bath sequence in "Joan Does Dynasty"; the slapstick comedy of Donna Haraway eating a messy cake with her hands in "The National Geography of Primates"; the emotive soap opera going on while Jean Franco talks about photo novellas. Actually, in the beginning we thought we were doing this Brechtian thing of showing the seams: placing the production process in the foreground, letting the audience hear cues and mistakes. It turns out that rather than causing "alienation" as Brecht sought, such strategies can become part of the entertainment. Now MTV and even NBC news have taken to introducing more imagery from "behind the scenes," loosening up their on-screen presence and creating a kind of pseudo transparency. This does not mean that they are coopting or commodifying the grassroots approach.

Audiences are increasingly cynical and bored, and the corporate networks are desperate. The whole move towards "reality TV" is an attempt to woo back eyeballs that have glazed over during the dead-end patter of situation comedies and game shows. There is a campy aspect to these programs that attracts a double audience: the ones who take it for what it is and the others who see the phoniness of the whole business. The inauthenticity of this kind of "reality" becomes part of the entertainment, audiences stay there to point out the contradictions of this kind of "process" and the opacity of their fake "transparency." A cogent criticism will add weight and hard facts to the instinctive skepticism. I think most effective political art does this: affirms the spectator's own liberatory intuition.

SZ/SSP: Is the goal of your work to impact mainstream politics and policies?

DDH: Although US video collectives — from Videofreex of the 1970s and Paper Tiger in the 1980s to the IMCS and Whispered Media — haven't really had a substantial impact in re-directing US mainstream media, the effect of this work has been much more significant worldwide. Institutions such as Downtown Community Television, DIVA (Damned Interfering Video Activists), Paper Tiger, Grand Rapids Community Media Center, Manhattan Neighborhood Network and hundreds of other collectives and resource centers have encouraged projects around the world, from the radio movements in Latin America to the workers video groups in Korea. Almost every week a traveling delegation visits the offices of Paper Tiger: taking notes, interviewing staff and borrowing copies of tapes. Brazil and Korea are now implementing local forms of public-access regulations. Chiapas has an elaborate micro-radio network that is an effort of the Zapatistas, the Paper Tigers and British radio techies. Indymedia.org, which was initiated in Seattle, now has sites in over a hundred countries. American independent media has had a greater effect outside of the United States than in our country itself.

SZ/SSP: Do you feel that this global interest in models of American media activism is a residue of US cultural imperialism?

DDH: I think it is our response to cultural imperialism. Because we are in "the belly of the beast" so to speak, we have to develop ways of fighting it from the inside. That we can do this becomes inspirational to those in the periphery. To me the only way to fight imperialism, in cultural and other forms, is by working in solidarity on an international level. What is happening in the anti-globalization movement is ironically a form of "globalization": the pooling together of the many varied forms of struggle against the exploitation of the earth and her people by corporations.

SZ/SSP: In light of the history of US global intervention and the current drive toward a war in Iraq, what response has Paper Tiger prepared — given its effectiveness in distributing critical/dissenting points of view during the Gulf War?

DDH: Many of those who have worked with Paper Tiger in the past have directed their energies to new projects. Simin Farkhondeh, one of the coordinating producers for the Gulf Crisis TV Project, has for many years been the coordinator of "Labor at the Crossroads," a weekly program on labour issues. This program has done several episodes about 9/11, especially concerning the health of workers involved in the clean-up operations who were exposed to deadly chemicals and very poor working conditions. Cathy Scott, another of the GWTVP coordinators, is now working on documentaries for Australian TV. Orlando Richards, Karen Ranucci, Molly Fink and myself have worked on getting the daily radio program Democracy Now! onto satellite as a television program. This live daily show is seen (and heard on radio) throughout the US and is perhaps the most important media initiative from the left in the last decade. It has covered many peace rallies and vigils (with regular reports from Women in Black from around the world), and commentary from writers and activists such as Howard Zinn, Noam Chomsky, Arundathi Roy, Manning Marrable and many others.

SZ/SSP: While in Toronto you spoke publicly about the US war on the American people, why in the context of an impending war with Iraq, did you choose to frame your discussion around the internal/American resistance to the American government?

DDH: The abuses of the "war on terror" are escalations of repression with deep roots in US history. The current formulations are a reprise of the Vietnam era and the conflicts of the Cold War years. The rebels of the late 1960s and early 1970s — the flower children, the Weathermen, the Black Panthers, Chicano and Puerto Rican movements, and so forth — were troublesome to the US power structure, which responded with a variety of counter strategies from cooptation to provocateurs. As for the former, it is not by chance that this era saw the formation of the arts and "war on poverty" bureaucracies. In the late 1970s and 1980s the struggle took a new turn, as the resistance became directed to building long term infrastructure, such as welfare-rights organizations, day-care centers, food co-ops and women's shelters. Public access television, media centers, art collectives and artists' rights organizations are the result of that "long haul" struggle. Paper Tiger and Deep Dish TV had their origins at that time; from the beginning both have had agreed-upon mandates to focus on issues of justice and political economy.

For the first time since the 1960s, there is now a critical mass of people who are completely opposed to the actions of the US government. This opposition is much more powerful than it was in the past, because of the level of organization: as a result of the long-term infrastructure support systems that have survived and with growth of the internet and email, satellite television and community radio can now reach more people. However the repressive apparatus is also heightened. The same technology connecting us to our struggle is also providing information to those who are defending the status quo. There has been a tremendous growth in prisons, surveillance and police repression of dissent, which, when combined with the tightening of social welfare and the shrinking of the economy, has created an internal war against the citizens of the US.

SZ/SSP: During the public presentation you gave in Toronto, you screened a really interesting video about the voting fix in Florida where a huge proportion of the Black community was systemically excluded from the polls for the last election. Could you briefly describe the video?

DDH: I showed a production by the Independent Media Center, directed by Joan Sekler and Richard Perez, that carefully puts together an overall picture of the 2000 election, leaving one with the certainty that this was not a simple matter of sloppy voting procedures, but ultimately a coup d'état. Bush's brother, Jeb, conspired with his attorney general (Katherine Harris) and the Supreme Court to ensure that George W. was elected.

SZ/SSP: You have access to an enormous amount of independent media and video made around the world. How do you perceive your responsibility as presenter of works such as this?

DDH: One of the exciting things about the internet is that people are sharing their work with each other. The whole network of indie-media centers has encouraged many levels of sharing of imagery and resources. I would like to place a number of the historical activist media works on line, so that this younger generation doesn't have to reinvent the wheel. I spend a lot of my time just sending tapes to people: not necessarily my tapes, but tapes from this wild diaspora of media mavens. For example the Korean Labour Videos are an inspiration to all those who are working with labour issues. The tapes about prisons are useful for showing people the reality of "freedom" in America.

SZ/SSP: What do you see as the key future strategies that need to be implemented to forward the goal of a democratic media?

DDH: UNESCO and the International Telecommunications Union have scheduled WSIS meetings (World Summit on the Information Society) for December 2003 in Geneva and 2005 in Tunis. Beyond the predictable NGO rhetoric about free speech and democratic media, already being co-opted by large media corporations and the US delegation, these meetings are a way for community media activists to take a stand as a global movement in opposition to commercial and military use of the world's airwaves and satellite paths. Will these meetings become the "Seattle" of the media? Some are planning to go to Geneva during the week prior to the formal discussions to hold workshops and forums about the potential for authentic media democracy.

The ITU regulates the global electronic spectrum. The public access movement in the United States has shown that media corporations can be "taxed" and regulated into providing space and resources for community expression. Perhaps it would be possible to have such stipulations attached to commercial and military use of satellite paths by the ITU: a levy to promote local media and dedicated space on any commercial transponders for non-commercial, cultural and informational programming. Why should Rupert Murdoch's Star TV extract enormous profits from the free use of what is in reality a global resource? The greatest numbers of satellites are military satellites. It is time for some transponders for peace.

Sarah Sharkey Pearce is a filmmaker and media educator in Toronto. She is currently working at InsideOut as a facilitator for the 2003 Queer Youth Digital Video Project.

Sarah Zammit is a Toronto-based documentary filmmaker. She is project manager at The Documentary Studio, an incubator for emerging documentary filmmakers.

Notes:

1. Three OCAP activists, Stefan Pilipa, John Clarke and Gaetan Heroux, have been identified by the State as "leaders" of the action and have been charged with participating in a riot and counselling to participate in a riot. The preliminary motions are currently underway with a trial likely to start soon.

2. Paper Tiger has been supported for production work by small grants from New York State Council on the Arts, the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs and through the income generated from the sale and rental of over 300 tapes. In the past, much of this funding was allocated to further productions of media critiques. The income from sales and rentals of these tapes has gone down with the tightening of educational budgets has placed more emphasis on foundation support, which favours workshops over media critique. See www.papertiger.org for more.

3. The public access movement in the US grew out of the Challenge for Change program initiated by the National Film Board of Canada. George Stoney, one of the coordinators for Challenge for Change in the early 1970s, was greatly inspired by the way video could be used to catalyze discussion and activism. He later taught at NYU, with his students eventually spreading out across the US, at times when most cities were just beginning their franchise negotiations with cable corporations. Since there was a great deal of competition among the cable companies for the lucrative municipal contracts, cities could demand certain 'pay-back' for granting the cable provider monopoly access to an audience and the city's 'rights of way.' George's students were able to convince many cities to negotiate for channels and studios for local community use. Many of those same pioneer messengers are still the backbone of leadership in the community media movement.

Active Practices Symposium: Impressions and Responses

review by Yvonne Singer
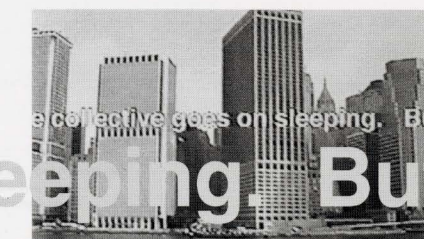
shrink (demo 4), Anthony Cokes, video still, 2001.

Artist, educator and Active Practices symposium respondent Yvonne Singer relays issues in art and activism as explored at Kingston's Agnes Etherington Art Centre in October 2002.

> "Like a lot of people, I feel extremely helpless and frustrated, as if whatever happens is totally out of my hands.... And the very idea of peace seems like a remarkably dated idea — you say "peace" and you're instantly back in the hotel bed with John and Yoko. And everyone treats you like you're a simpleton."
>
> **Matt Crookshank, artist, interview in *The Globe and Mail*, October 3, 2002.**

> " ...nobody is pretending that art is in a position to stop a war. It's not that direct. Art is very good, however, at education and at bringing people together."
>
> **Luis Jacob, artist, interview in *The Globe and Mail*, October 3, 2002.**

> "Artists, meanwhile, are sticking to the traditional leftist/artsy script by staging plaintive, dead-baby-strewn anti-war exhibits and performances."
>
> R. M. Vaughan, "The peace stars, celebrities and artists are lined up to voice their opposition to the war in Iraq. How have things changed since the '60s?"
>
> ***The Globe and Mail*, October 3, 2002.**

A flurry of investigations into the relationship between art and activism have arisen in recent months. In *The Globe and Mail*, these quotations from artists on the topic responded to R.M.Vaughan's article exploring the shifting roles and perceptions of activist art since the '60s. The article posed such questions as: What is activist art? Can we be practicing artists and social activists at the same time? What are the limits to challenging the status quo?

Though not limited to a particular temporal reference such as the '60s, relevant responses were provoked by panelists at the recent *Active Practices* symposium at the Agnes Etherington Art Centre in Kingston. *Active Practices* was, in the words of its organizers, "a one-day symposium on activist art and the relationship between visual representation and social values," programmed to complement the centre's *Better Worlds* exhibition, curated by Jan Allen. The symposium created a platform for artists whose works explore "diverse issues ranging from the politics of urban spaces, homelessness, education, democracy and dissent to failed ideologies, corporate hegemony and globalization."

The day was divided into two panels comprised of artists in the exhibition. The morning panel, titled "UTOPIC IMPULSES IN VISUAL ART: viable ideals, (im)perfect pasts and future fictions" was

Coke Dump, Mindy Yan Miller,
2003, performance.
Photo: Bernard Clark

moderated by Jan Allen and included Eleanor Bond, Robin Pacific and Tony Cokes. In the afternoon session, "ACTING TOGETHER: art, efficacy and collective action," participants Luis Jacob, Ali Kazimi and New Error Art Collaborative were moderated by artist Kika Thorne. Clive Robertson and I were asked to respond to each of these panels.

The thematic division and diversity of practices explored throughout the day emulated the range of models available to and utilized by activist artists. Among the models examined were the socially motivated solo artist, the studio as politicized site of production, collaborative versus individual action, community-based art, mass-media intervention and the various individuals, organizations and publics that these models seek to engage. The panelists presented their work and affiliated motivations, exploring, among other things, the way in which the decision to work alone or collaboratively constructs the conditions and the form of the work produced.

Activating The Utopian

In their panel, artists Robin Pacific, Eleanor Bond and Tony Cokes explored the ambiguities inherent in the relationships between artistic motivations, the conditions of the production of work, and the venues in which the work is seen and circulated.

Robin Pacific draws heavily from the role of the artist in the utopian moment of the Russian revolution. As a performance artist she produces solo works and is also very active in community arts production.

Eleanor Bond works alone in the studio producing painterly utopian — to some, dystopian — visions of urban environments on canvas. Her social engagement is evidenced by the subject of her paintings, her public commissions and her attempts to involve people in the production and reception of her work.

Tony Cokes uses his videos as a platform to present critical analyses of contemporary American policy and ideology. His form of collaboration is derived from the conditions of the world he inhabits.

In their formulations of utopian ideals, each panelist explored the location and temporality associated with their inspirations.

Robin Pacific, for example, situated hope and utopia in a call to action for artists to "change the world" as they did in Russia at the beginning of the twentieth century. This call was tempered, however, by her presentation of a cheeky, ironic video entitled *The Ant-ernationale,* in which an ant is followed from a macroscopic perspective as it scrambles over revolutionary

texts of Marx and Engels, to the accompanying soundtrack of a voice singing *The Internationale,* anthem of the Bolshevic revolution. The song's lyrics, "Arise ye workers from your slumbers. Arise ye prisoners of want. For reason in revolt now thunders. And at last ends the age of cant..." are hauntingly relevant to the current situation in Iraq. The seemingly futile and solitary march of the ant over a stack of books piled in what appears to be the socially removed location of a desk in the academy or studio present a familiar backdrop for current debates about the ability of artists and intellectuals to directly engage in social change.

In spite of this ironic portrayal, Pacific pointed out that there was "no distinction between political revolution and spiritual rejuvenation in the Russian avant-garde" and that, "artists played a crucial role in setting up the state." "Malevich," she noted, "was the Minister of Culture!" Conscious of the psychic numbness that is accorded to the current state of the world and a postmodern cynicism that renders all texts equally suspect, Pacific repeats and responds to a question posed by theorist Julia Kristeva: "Against whom can we revolt?" According to Pacific, we need to strip away the horrors to find the ideals. To this end, Pacific advocated a passionate plea to return to a pre-Roman perspective with a feminist agenda, when the Earth Mother ruled the world.

Elements of the utopian visions of Russian revolutionary artists cascade into Eleanor Bond's large-scale paintings of urban and industrial landscapes. They are, however, located in the very material visionary schemes of urban sites that deal with contemporary social issues, such as unemployment, ageism, healthcare, security and safety. In her presentation, she further probed the role of the artist-as-activist by posing questions such as, "How does one integrate collective experience into a traditional studio practice?" and "How viable is painting as a social practice?"

Further to these questions, Bond discussed a project that she worked on in Rotterdam related to their technology for building underground environments. Bond made paintings that were beautiful and valorized Rotterdam's belief in technology's ability to be socially progressive. Within this, she found herself submerging critiques and questioning the actual possibility of imaging a future. "Often we end up with Hollywood fictionialized images of the future," she says and questions, "Can one image a future or refer to previous utopian visions without the drag of nostalgia? Can Beauty be subversive?"

Tony Cokes answered this last question by screening a video that is part of an ongoing project entitled *shrink*. In *shrink*, the formal beauty of images of the nighttime skyline of New York City and a series of rhythmic sounds are juxtaposed with texts about power politics and the definition of evil with reference to America's response to terrorism after 9/11. Cokes is interested in language as image and the mutual contamination ensuing from this combination. The text on screen is based on his

interview with French thinker Alain Badiou. Words and phrases like "self-evidence of evil" flash on screen. We read and hear them in our heads as a staccato voice. The force of text countered by the lyrical, rhythmic sounds and images is powerful and seductive. As we read, we hear the words in our head and become conscious of our internalization of ideas we may or may not agree with. The acts of viewing and reading become subversive. As viewers we are both witness to and complicit in the construction of the work. In Cokes's work, beauty functions as a strategy to seduce the viewer in the same way that advertising does, drawing attention to the ways in which ideologies seep into the everyday.

His work and commentary confront another series of questions: What does this subjective awareness activate in the viewer? Are current utopian visions expressions of conservative, regressive ideologies, by their claims of universality, of one vision fits all?

Collaborative Practice

While Pacific, Bond and Cokes each addressed the issue of collaboration within their practices as solo artists, in the second panel, artists Luis Jacob, Ali Kazimi and the New Error Art Collective described collaborative projects that function in the context of grassroots communities.

Where Cokes collaborates with thinkers and within the subjective experience of the viewer, Ali Kazimi's work as a documentary filmmaker places him in situations where he physically and ideologically collaborates with his subjects directly. Kazimi works closely with the communities whose stories he wants to tell. He and his

sheltering (mis)conceptions (detail), New Error Art Collaborative, 2001, installation. Photo: Cheryl O'Brien.

MarxZauberMantel (detail), Robin Pacific, 2001.
Photo: Cheryl O'Brien.
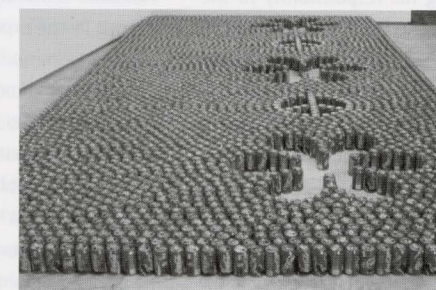
drop out (detail), Mindy Yan Miller, installation, 2001. Photo: Cheryl O'Brien.

subjects are mutually dependent — if their stories are told and circulated, they are to serve the purposes of both the filmmaker and the subject. Kazimi feels a tremendous responsibility for presenting the stories of people engaged in specific struggles for social justice, for land and against oppression.

In his presentation, Kazimi shared his experiences of making the film *Narmada: A Valley Rises,* which examines the Save Narmada Movement, and documents the 22km march in India to stop the construction of a World Bank-funded dam. Marchers were stopped at the border of the province where the dam was slated for construction and were confronted by government police forces. Kazimi wanted the film to reach a television audience and constructed a straightforward narrative to clarify the motivation of the protestors. The World Bank withdrew and a study was instituted as a result of the grassroots movement and the worldwide media coverage of the protests.

Kazimi presented an excerpt from *Documenting Dissenting,* a personal examination of the harassment and intimidation he encountered during the 2001 FTAA Summit in Quebec City. Independent filmmakers, Kazimi relayed, do not have the same protection as affiliated journalists and are, rather, defined by the company they keep. Mistrust of the camera runs deep on both sides in both India and Quebec City, placing the filmmaker in a difficult ethical and artistic position.

In response to critiques about the relationship between the subject and the maker of documentary film, Ali Kazimi described the contact that he has maintained with the protestors in India and their use of the copy of the film as a way of negotiating his responsibility to the people whose story he has told. He is aware, however, that the tapes could have equally fallen into the hands of the police, placing himself and others in danger. While closely aligned to the protestors he questions his own position: "Am I a protestor? Am I documenting what is happening?" Moved by Kazimi's story, I am tempted to consider whether risking personal security is a necessary condition for

being an effective activist artist. Here, however, creeps a fear of romanticizing these ideas of risk-taking. As we saw with the work of Cokes and others, there exists a trajectory of activisms, such as activations of the subject, that can be seen as equally transgressive and dangerous as the kind of direct action that Kazimi describes.

The issue of aesthetic and moral responsibility recurs in the presentation of work by the New Error Art Collaborative team of Julia Fiala and York Lethbridge. Their practice is issue-driven and community based. In their presentation, Fiala and Lethbridge described the artistic medium employed in their work *sheltering (mis)conceptions,* an installation originally placed in vacant storefronts on Princess Street in Kingston, Ontario, as "connective aesthetics." The installation examined how urban spaces are negotiated. By highlighting the transient elements of the street — the homeless, panhandlers, street youth, the fluctuation of businesses — Fiala and Lethbridge sought to expose the social strata that exist in the city. Using this very specific site as the location of a field study, they reveal the ways that tourists, retail businesses, students, street dwellers and military personnel function in tension with one another in the city. They negotiated with landlords to place art in vacant storefronts. The landlords were resistant because they were concerned that this use of the storefront would signal economic failure. The installations included informal interviews and discussions with the homeless and other residents presented on paper banners, sleeping bags and slides. Emphasizing the transient nature of this street, a neon sign alternately read Vagrancy and Vacancy.

Fiala and Lethbridge felt that they were transformed by the experience but were not certain how the communities were changed by their actions. They acknowledged that they may have been presumptuous and naive in their preconceptions at the outset of the project. While this work was accessible outside of the art community, I must ask, Who is the audience for activist art? Who is accountable and to whom? Who is speaking for whom?

Artist, curator and community organizer Luis Jacob approached these questions differently. He makes no distinction between the artist working collaboratively or as an individual. He sees the artist's role primarily as initiator of the art-making process and that of the audience as shaping its final form. Jacob situated this interest in a range of collaborative projects from Vancouver and Toronto in the 1970s that engaged directly with social spaces. He provided documentation of works by General Idea, a performance by New York Corees Sponge Dance School of Vancouver in which a synchronized swimming routine was presented in a public pool by the dancers outfitted in shark fin bathing caps and Mr. Peanut's campaign in the Vancouver mayoral elections of 1974 by members of Image Bank. Jacob related these interventions to contemporary projects with which he has been involved with including *Mattress City,* in which a field of mattresses was placed on the public plaza in front of City Hall during the amalgamation of Toronto's megacity and *Truck Stop 12,* a mobile van that took art to shopping malls, parking lots, parks and community halls. Jacob believes in the impermeability between art and non-art, referring to the audience-receiver-producers who shape the work initiated by the artist as "practising non-artists."

What happens to these practicing non-artists when they are engaged in the completion of this work? How does this agency extended to the audience relate to more direct forms of social change as illustrated by Kazimi, Fiala and Lethbridge? Like Walter Benjamin's collections, Active Practices opened up a number of questions that hang in the air, unarticulated. Are utopian visions regressive or progressive? Is idealism a necessary component of activist practices? Can art be a transformative experience? Is the museum a compromising site for the presentation of controversial political and social issues? Who is speaking for whom? Are we preaching to the converted? Activating these questions is perhaps a first step toward the better world each of us imagines.

Yvonne Singer is a practicing artist and associate professor in the department of visual art, York University where she teaches a course called "The Artist as Activist and Educator."

Power Shift
Power to the People

Contemporary Art Forum: Kitchener and Area
September 21-29, 2002
City Hall, Kitchener, Ontario
review by Mark Schilling

Since 2001, Contemporary Art Forum: Kitchener and Area (CAFKA) has presented a thematic event about the Kitchener-Waterloo region. In 2001, the theme "and then we take berlin" dealt with Kitchener's history based on the city's name change from Berlin during the First World War, a reflection of the German history of the region. In September 2002, the focus was on public ownership of hydro-electricity as it came to the region in the early twentieth century under the slogan "Power to the People."

On the night of the opening of this year's event, which takes place annually in and around Kitchener City Hall, I was blinded by the search light of Daniel Olson's work *Fifteen Seconds* — a work "intended to offer the people of Kitchener a brief moment in the limelight." I did not think of celebrity so much as I did of a more sinister side of German history. Olson was not on the catwalk of a stage set; he was perched in a guard tower in front of the entrance to City Hall. Although he was, literally, giving the power back to the people by shifting the spotlight from artist to viewer, there were other implications of this act. The audience was not free to choose whether or not to be involved. If a passer by liked the attention, the moment was fleeting; if the audience was uncomfortable with the attention, the light was oppressive. The power remained with the artist. This was not the only moment that evening where attempts to shift art-world power relations brought the theme of "Power to the People" into focus with respect to the citizens of Kitchener and their relationship to City Hall. Though the event presented a wide cross-section of art, the most interesting work was intervention-based, directly engaging people with art.

Fifteen Seconds, Daniel Olson, 2002, performance. Photo: Elisabeth Feryn. Courtesy: CAFKA.

British performance artist John Dummett, who works under the name "otiose," investigated the language of the slogan "Power to the People" by inviting the public over the course of the event to participate in a "collaborative text" realized through dictation machines, picket signs and notice boards. Walking among crowds at the opening, otiose stopped and silently crouched behind his picket sign, offering a blank space and magic marker for participants to interpret the title of the event.
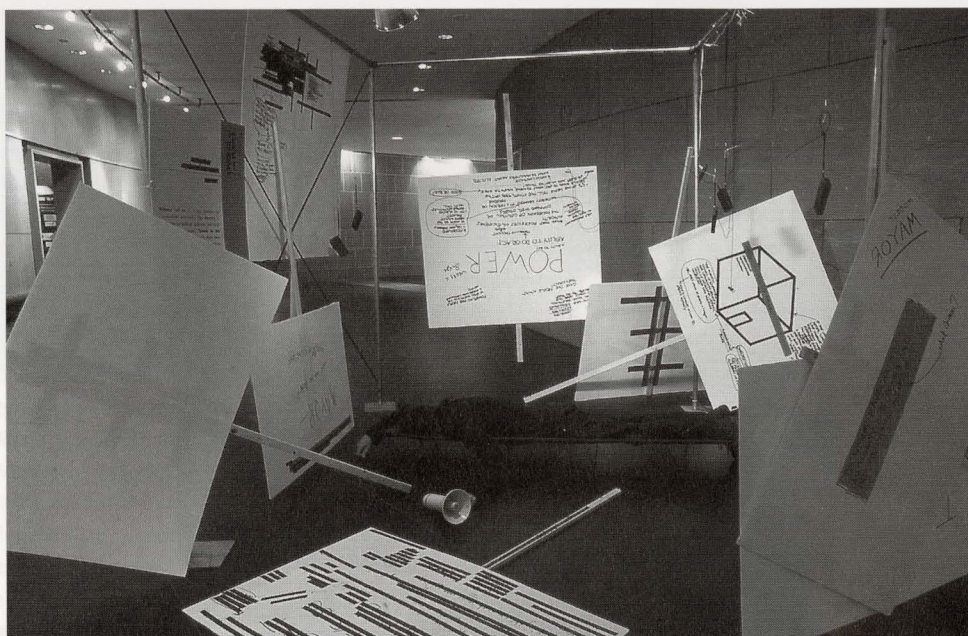
Witness/Power to the People, Otiose (John Dummet), 2002, performance.
Photo: Elisabeth Feryn. Courtesy: CAFKA.

The artist's silent interaction allowed the piece a palpable tension beyond just providing a space for public comment. The artist was present but did not interact, looking away from the audience as he held the sign up.

As a solitary figure, Otiose didn't present the same impact as a crowd of protestors holding signs. He was the lone crank, thumbing his nose at authority. His peculiar capitulating gesture offered up the sign for whatever an audience member chose to write. His action had a subtle, dry humour to it, as if declaring, "regardless of what you say, I will make a public spectacle of myself for you." The word, otiose, is synonymous with futility, serving no apparent function. The artist as the fool as social critic has a rich history within British culture. The British, known for their monarchy and rigid class system, also have a tradition of "taking it to the streets," of the little guy having something to say. Often the stereotype of Canadians and Ontarians is one of middle-class reserve and complacency. This intervention was a welcome spectacle.

Out on the street, Hamilton artist Simon Frank stenciled a poem on the sidewalk — literally *Concrete Poetry*. Each phrase of his poem was connected to the last, placed several paces apart, by blue arrows. Frank forced the viewer to engage with the piece by walking, to become

a flaneur carefully tracing a slow path through the crowded sidewalks, but not to window shop. The flaneur's eyes were down, the pace of Frank's poem dictating one's speed. On a busy day, one would have to dodge disinterested pedestrians and office workers in order to read the piece. As a "defacement" of city property, *Concrete Poetry* was legitimized through the pedestrian traffic. Conditioned to ignore normal day-to-day graffiti, here the pedestrian was given an option. Slowing to read the poetry meant altering their routine, being singled out as an outsider, a tourist. As an authorized form of graffiti on the street in front of City Hall, *Concrete Poetry* spoke of a bureaucracy willing to be vandalized temporarily in an effort to embrace a world of contemporary art if only for the tourism business it brings to the city. Frank's work embraced the irony of being a contemporary artist and the games artists must often play with levels of government. As an intervention in the downtown landscape, Frank had to make a choice: seek permission to deface the sidewalks and guarantee public access to his work while removing any notion of subversion from the piece, or work outside the system under the cover of darkness.

In *Fifteen Seconds* Daniel Olson spotlights the role the viewer plays within the shifting power relations between artist and audience. A similar strategy is at play in *P2P*, a collaborative

work by architects Matt, Rob and Susan Gorbet. *P2P* animated the theme of "Power to the People" as directly as an on-off switch. A large sign made up of 125 lightbulbs was placed above the main entrance to City Hall. Across the plaza a control panel of simple light switches was accessible twenty-four hours a day for the duration of the show. Any passer by was welcomed express whatever they wanted by simply spelling it out with a flick of these switches, activating standard lightbulbs. The key to *P2P* is the simplicity of the operation. Perhaps unintended was a bizarre confrontation I witnessed on opening night around midnight between City Hall security, two young police officers and a group of local teens. This group of teens, at first not being aware of the "art" of *P2P*, nevertheless felt free to engage with the work, spelling out things like "weed" and sending messages to their friends across the street.

To have a group of teens cheering wildly in the night was perhaps too much for two young and obviously inexperienced cops who were cycling by. The police tried to clear the area, which had attracted a crowd including myself, in an attempt to prevent interaction with the work. One cop — complete with a short blond brush cut and a great deal of nervous energy — told a man to step down from the control-panel platform. This man, a passer by, told the young cop to get out of his space. Leaning into the man's face the cop sarcastically replied "Am I in your space?". This confrontation continued for ten minutes. The teens then decided to spell FU PIGS, which was too much for a security guard who had become a part of the scene. He decided it was time to shut down *P2P*. We were told that we must be "sick" to allow kids to see this kind of garbage. Here, as bystanders, we were all positioned as responsible for the work; it appeared that the police were assuming our interest in the work implicated us. The two cops and the security guard tried of find the power source of *P2P*. They were perhaps looking for a gigantic plug to disconnect the power and they contemplated cutting the wires. Had they done so they most likely would have killed themselves. At one point the security guard told us it was his responsibility to protect the morals of

the city. This lasted forty minutes until the cops were told by their supervisors to leave. The work remained in operation for the duration of the show.

Perhaps it is obvious to state the irony in all this. *P2P* used lightbulbs to give voice in a very public way to anyone passing by. The teenagers "got" the piece ultimately. They understood their freedom and argued quite effectively that this was theirs to use, to say what they want. One of the teens pointed out to the cops that the sign next to the work, the artists' statement, indicated the purpose was to "allow citizens to communicate directly, without the oversight of a centralized authority, within a government-owned space." The police and the rent-a-cop, assuming a hostile, authoritarian attitude to *P2P*, in a sense summed up the evening. Looking for a cartoonish electrical plug, these defenders of public morals demonstrated not only a thuggish misunderstanding of the work but a need to shut down what they could not comprehend. In doing so they allowed a group of teenagers to win an intellectual confrontation, which is really in a way what "Power to the People" was all about.

Mark Schilling is an Ontario-based artist and writer. He has an MFA from the University of Western Ontario and is currently completing an MA in art history at UWO.

P2P, Matt Gorbet, Susan Gorbet, & Rob Gorbet, 2002, installation.
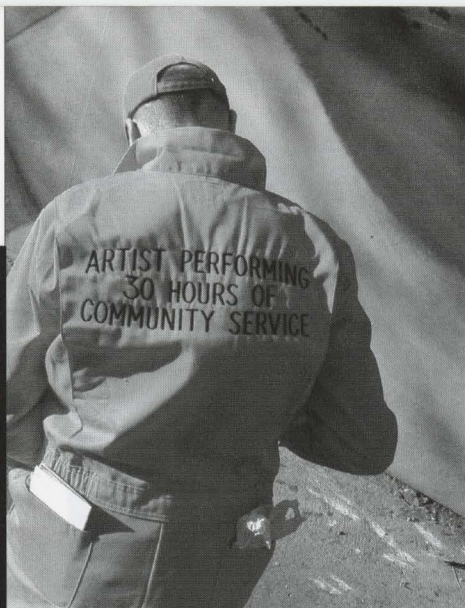Photo: Elisabeth Feryn. Courtesy: CAFKA.

Photo: Miklós Legrady
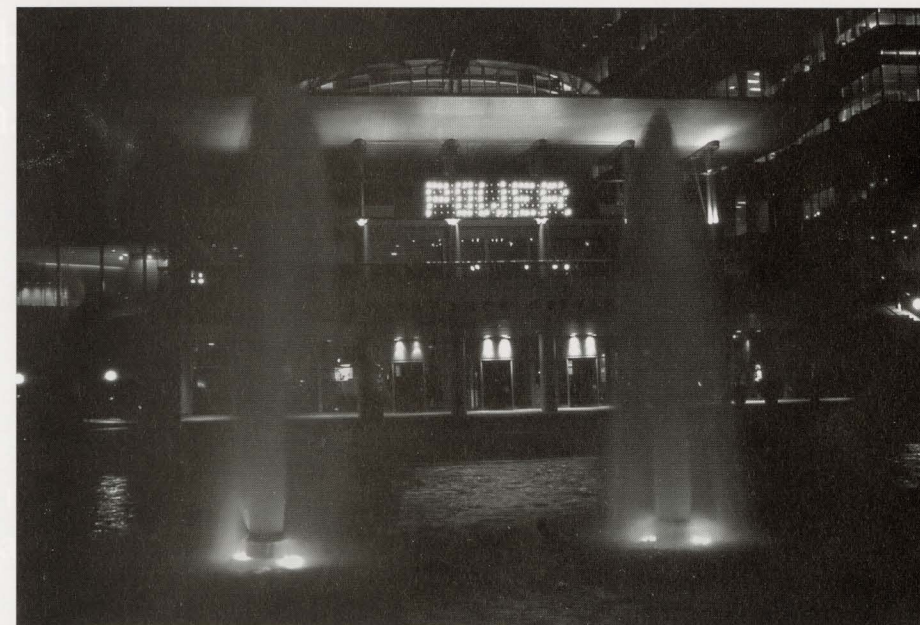
A *Diddly Squat* Response

by Bruce Barber

Dear Tamara Stone,

Ah, the vicissitudes of the politically incorrect! Thank you, Tamara, for your ShortFuse critical reflections (Fuse 26:1) on my *Diddly Squat: Three performances about money* which I undertook in Toronto last November as part of the 7a 11d performance festival. It is a pity that you were unable to contextualize the *Diddly Squat* performance more appropriately as part of my thirty-year history of work as an artist and writer before you began to implicitly question my ethical position(s) on homelessness, squatting, criminality, or for that matter, oppositional art practice. Allow me, in this 1500-word allocation, to introduce some aspects of my experience with this work to you and our fellow readers of FUSE.

The bucket action you witnessed at Art System was the result of my performing thirty hours of community service, which consisted of scraping gum from the pavement on Queen Street West between Bathurst Street and Spadina Avenue. As you recognized, passing this potentially bio-hazardous material around for audience members to smell elicited some interesting responses ranging from nervous laughter to

expressions of pure disgust. Two enterprising individuals even took the opportunity to add their gum to the bucket. Since returning to Halifax I have pressed the Queen West gum into a plexiglass box which is a similar in weight and dimensions to a bar of gold. Perhaps the gum box may improve in value as it matures?

You are correct in surmising that my thirty hours of community service was self-imposed and I was dressed in the common orange boiler suit of incarcerated individuals who inhabit many penal institutions throughout North America. Those serving community service for minor criminal offences are often sentenced through so-called Adult Diversion Programs imposed by the courts in lieu of incarceration, which is reserved for more serious offenders. In my choice of clothing I conflated the two in order to demonstrate that both are institutionalized responses to criminality that reproduce "othering" behaviours among members of the general population. During my performance of community work I lost one community who would recognize me perhaps as a middle-class professional, and gained some others, including a similarly dressed Jamaican TTC worker removing posters from the walls and poles on Queen West. The day previous to my community service on Queen West, one thousand workers were engaged in scraping 600,000 wads of gum from Tiananmen Square in Beijing as preparation for the Sixteenth Communist Party Congress in that city. Now there's community! I do not view community service, either donated or enforced, as "pointless or banal," as described in your essay. The point of my performance is that both services — altruistic and otherwise — have an economic dimension that is worthy of our attention. And who can faithfully provide answers to the questions "art for, or on behalf of whom?" without now acknowledging several decades of questioning the very concept of community? Do politicians have a community? Do criminals have a community? Do artists have a community? Perhaps, gasp...I'm representing your community! During the performance I became essentially invisible, like other socially/institutionally deemed subordinate individuals who inhabit the streets of Toronto. Among them, I experienced some communality,

and yes, even communion on one significant occasion when I paid a young itinerate homeless man (from Halifax, incidentally), to read me a poignant poem he had written about losing his girlfriend. Maybe we should all invite someone "indiscriminately" into our homes whether they be in Parkdale or Rosedale. Maybe we could learn something. It was interesting don't you think that when I asked who owned property in the room that night, no one owned up to the fact! "That was priceless!" as one astute email correspondent from Toronto communicated to me after the event. Yes, Skip Arnold offered to take a squat sign but he lived in L.A. and was about to vacate (I think he said the word "evicted") from his rental accommodation, hence my hesitation in giving him the sign. Maybe Torontonians are too polite!

I gave away ten of the squat signs to homeless youths on Queen West (many of them from parts East — you know, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland), young people who can't afford a decent meal at the Rivoli or a beer even at the Cameron House. I announced at Art System that I had identified a potential squat in the Spadina region by stapling the sign on a vacant building. It could have been 213/215 Parliament Street, 10/12 Hagerman Street, 108 Shuter, 31 Tracy, 22 Wascana Avenue or 5/7 Foster place, buildings identified by some enterprising Toronto squat advocates to publicize the plight of Toronto's homeless and the inaction of the City Council on the issue. But how self-righteous are we who applaud the resistance of Tent City homeless activists when the police storm their abodes, yet won't open our doors to any of one of them for a night, a week or a month? The third component of my *Diddly Squat* performance, which you neglected to light your ShortFuse under, was my reading of all of my credit card numbers in a public place. And like the other occasion when I did this in public, one individual asked for my PIN number. Now you and I have nothing! I will enjoy our continued correspondence: you may reach me at bbarber@nscad.ns.ca.

Bruce Barber has been writing and exhibiting internationally since 1972. He teaches at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design.

Rebecca Belmore, *State of Grace*, 2002, inkjet on paper. Photo courtesy of the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, Vancouver and Howard Ursuliak. © 2002 Rebecca Belmore and Donna Hagerman, Vancouver.

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