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FUSE

M A G A Z I N E

Negotiating Dissent



Naomi Binder Wall, Hanadi Loubani, Sara Matthews, Ilana Salama Ortar, and Stephen Wright engage in *Negotiations*

Daniel Munro queries *Cultural Looting and Ethical Consistency*

tobias c. van Veen decodes Canada Council spin on House & Techno



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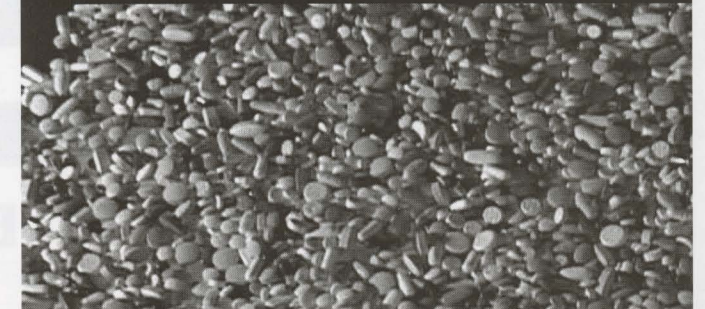
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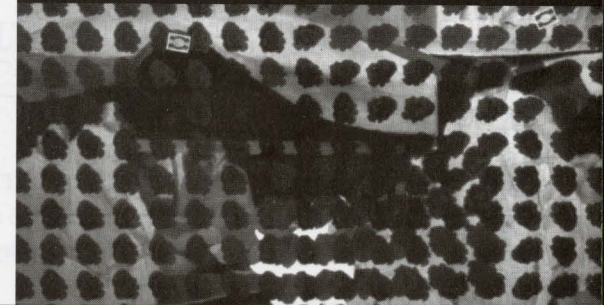
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Gita Hashemi, 2003. Photo: archival image. Courtesy: Negotiations Working Group.

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In mid-August, one South Indian and twenty Pakistani men were detained by the Department of Citizenship and Immigration and the RCMP on the basis of visa violations, and jailed on the basis of suspected links to terrorist organizations—Or more likely, *prima facie* semblance with a terrorist profile. But while RCMP Commissioner Giuliano Zaccardelli was surprisingly quick to acknowledge the lack of evidence linking the men to terror organizations, customs has demonstrated a Bushlike unwillingness to admit that they acted without knowledge or evidence to justify their action. At the time of this writing three men have been ordered released for lack of evidence, but the threat of deportation still looms. As for those still held at the Maplehurst Detention Centre, according to Project Threadbare (a solidarity group working to have the men freed) they have been and continue to be tortured and harassed, reviled as Taliban and Al-Qaeda by prison guards.

Despite some measure of dissemination of these facts in mainstream media, there has been no mass hue and cry against the fate of these men. What opposition there has been, has come from family members, politicized South Asian organizations and activist communities — from those with a personal, community and/or ideological stake in the men's release, and in opposing racial profiling and racist deportation practices. Indeed, while *Macleans*

magazine can, with stereotypically Canadian narcissism, pitch itself through a self-congratulatory distinction between "balance and insight" and "Shock and Awe," on the subject of profiling in immigration, policing and the bureaucratic and cultural management of race, Dick Nixon's silent majority appears to be alive and well and living in Canada, all too happy to signal its inarticulate consent, presumably in exchange for the comfort of a little us-style national security.

The question of consent and consensus is always a vexed one, and the accusation of pandering to "special interests" retains a powerfully persuasive charge within populist politics. Even within communities and collectivities wherein difference is held as a value, the liberal wish that all be treated as equals fosters an anxious will to demonstrate balance, avoid the appearance of partisan bias, to articulate one's self in the name of the needs of the whole. All differences being equal is the equation. Of course the political and economic landscape we negotiate must be ignored for that fantasy of equality-in-difference to retain its coherence.



Video Petition Project. Artist Emergency Response, 2003, installation detail. Photo: Babak Salari. Courtesy: Negotiations Working Group.

Nearly half of this issue of Fuse is given over to coverage of and engagement with Negotiations: From a Piece of Land to a Land of Peace, a program of artist and activist cultural engagement in solidarity with the Palestinian people and with Israeli Jews working to end the occupation of Palestine. In editorial committee meetings preparing for the publication of this issue, we debated the wisdom, as well as the politics, of giving over so much space in one issue to coverage of a single, if admittedly important and complex, event. And though it might be said that consent was given, consensus on this issue, on our coverage of it, is a murkier matter. Aside from the obvious fact that there are *many* important and complex artistic and activist interventions, and a host of issues deserving of attention, there was also the question of negotiating our individual stakes and positions, a question that has necessarily recurred to trouble the appearance of consensus as anything other than an agonistic, contingent, even momentary determination. So one question posed by this issue of Fuse is this: what does it mean to negotiate between consent and consensus? And, conversely, what is it to intervene in (against) the appearance of hegemonic consensus? How might one unearth what has been disappeared to effect the appearance of consensus?

For if it is one of our organizing contentions that within any "fair and balanced" account there is necessarily the trace of whatever (usually buried) relations of force were sufficient to level the playing field, it is difficult not to wonder if imbricated in any discussion as to how much space to give to negotiations are anxieties as to how much ground "to give" to Palestine, of how to place an anti-Zionist politic (without unwittingly seeding, or ceding ground to, an anti-Semitic politic). As if such decisions are made in editorial committee meetings. And yet.

So if this issue of Fuse appears a little unbalanced, then that is a wager we are making, that it is worth leaving bare the violence of taking positions, even positions of solidarity. A wager that acknowledges that the work of solidarity is haunted by and conflictedly works through not only the fantasies of rational and balanced reportage, of not getting our hands dirty, of

conflict-free solutions, but also through the risks of idealizing simplifications of, or over-identification with, any given "other," of giving up one's own grounds, one's capacity for judgment, in the name of an other.

Taking this chance, these chances, within this issue you will find our feature interview presenting Negotiations organizers Hanadi Loubani and Sara Matthews in conversation with Israeli artist Ilana Salama Ortar and Paris-based theorist Steven Wright. In it they discuss Ortar and Wright's collaborative multimedia venture "Land without Soil, Art without Artwork," treating both their specific interventions around soil theft in South Lebanon, and larger questions of geopolitically authored symbolic objects and activist applications of artistic competencies. Reviews by Richard Fung and Naomi Binder Wall treat the collaborative cultural work of Palestinian, Israeli and other artist-activists engaged in contesting the material and imaginative conditions of the Israeli occupation, and Negotiations artistic director Gita Hashemi offers retrospective theorization of the Negotiations working group's curatorial project. As well, in this issue Daniel Munro interrogates the ethical consistency of the British Museum's outcry against cultural looting in Iraq given their longstanding refusal to relinquish the cultural heritage of British imperialism, tobias c. van Veen traces the racist contours of an aporia in arts bodies' understanding of, and funding for, house and techno music, Toni Latour and Rina Larsson make a camp foray into public relations in and around the Vancouver Queer Film and Video Festival and Amy Karlinsky responds with self-reflexive critique to the (re)circulation of the Art of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution.

If the one of the conditions of refusing the false consensus of common sense is to risk one's certainties, one's criteria for judgment, it is certainly naive to think this frees one from the necessity of making judgments, and of taking chances. With these articles, and in its ongoing project, Fuse invites its readership to think through and to wager for the cultural work of dissent, against consensus, in recognition of the fragile nature of the former, and the potentially annihilating capacities of the latter.

— the Editorial Committee

When Neil MacGregor first learned about the looting of art and cultural artifacts in Iraq during the most recent war he quickly moved to do what he could to help preserve what was left and to recover what had been stolen. The director of the British Museum described the looting as a "disaster" and called on the British prime minister to do more to protect objects of Iraqi cultural heritage. Days later he flew to Paris to attend a UNESCO meeting on the crisis. His commitment to protect Iraqi and Arabian cultural heritage was clear.

MacGregor's hope was that many of the two to three thousand objects that UNESCO estimates were stolen could be recovered before they found their way into the hands of black-market collectors. Scrolls, antique furniture, sculpture, pottery and jewelry from the Sumerian, Assyrian and Babylonian cultures, as well as many contemporary Iraqi cultural objects were among the looted goods. The *Warka Head*, a Sumerian object dated to 3100 BC, is thought by many in the art world to be one of the greatest losses to Iraq. Some of the objects have since been located, either returned by Iraqis who said

that they had taken them in order to protect them from looters or identified by legitimate traders who were offered illicit deals on priceless works. But many are still missing and likely already on their way to private collections in Britain, the United States and elsewhere.

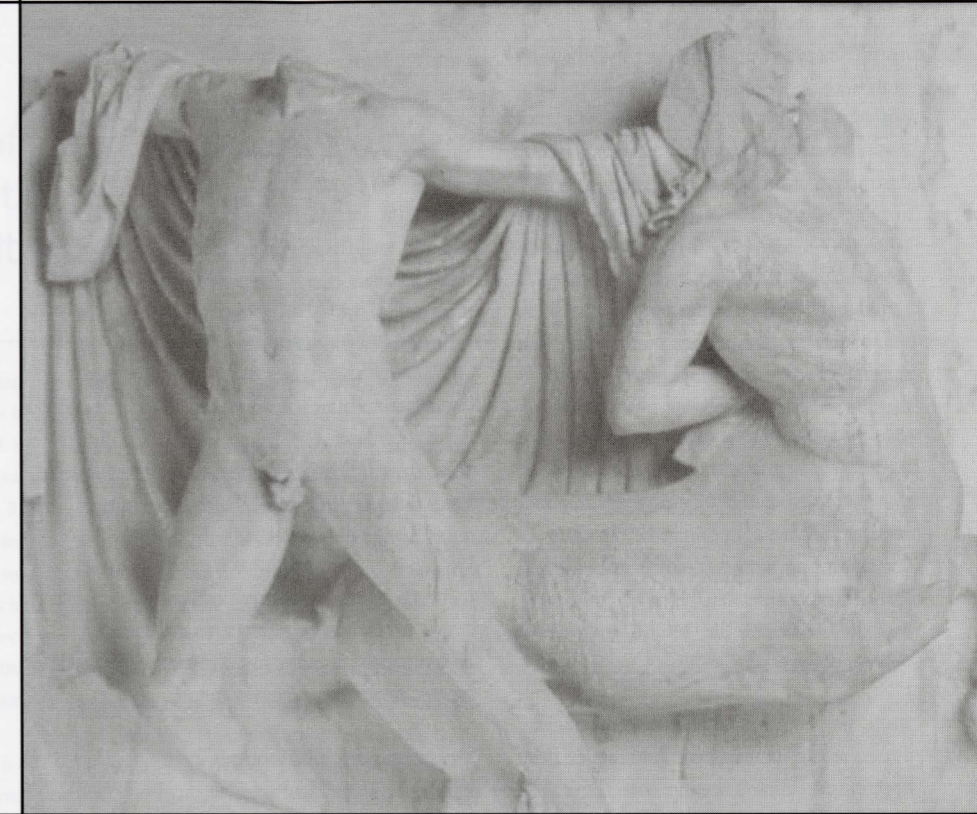
The International Council of Museums (ICOM), of which MacGregor's British Museum is a member, followed his lead and released a statement which expressed "grave concern over the destruction of the Iraqi heritage and the looting of the museums in Iraq." Highly critical of the American and British governments' complacency in defending Iraq's culture, it called on the "countries involved in this conflict to assume their responsibilities by ensuring the protection of all the monuments, archaeological sites, museums and other heritage institutions in Iraq."

Yet this is the same International Council of Museums that has adamantly opposed the repatriation of art and cultural artifacts acquired by dodgy means during the heyday of British colonial rule. Last year, in response to a

Cultural Looting and Ethical Consistency

by Daniel Munro

South Metope XXVII (Image from the Elgin Collection. B.F. Cook. *The Elgin Marbles*. Second Edition. London: The British Museum Press, 1997)



even stronger. At the time of the deal the British knew that Greece was under Ottoman control and, in that light, can be seen as having taken advantage of a weaker party. Objects permanently taken from cultures unable to protect them are no less stolen goods than those objects taken from the strongest of nations.

Identity, education and ownership

Of course the British Museum and the ICOM can, and in fact do, argue that even when certain objects are acquired by questionable means, over a long period of time they become part of the heritage of the nations in which they are housed. Moreover, they argue that to repatriate such objects would damage the cross-cultural educational missions of so-called "Universal Museums" whose collections represent a mosaic of art and artifacts from many of the world's diverse cultures. But both of those arguments fail when confronted with the principles implicit in the criticisms made of the looting in Iraq.

Notice how the ICOM's statement that objects become part of the heritage of the nations that house them works to undercut the force of repatriation claims made by the representatives of

cultures who do not have the protection or control of a particular nation-state. The institutions of nation-states, rather than those of stateless cultures, are regarded over time as the legitimate owners of cultural objects. But the commitment to the duty to protect revealed in the condemnation of the looting implies that a culture need not control its own state machinery in order to retain a right not to have its cultural treasures stolen. To be sure, in the midst of war and in the immediate postwar context, the Iraqi state machinery was in tatters. Nevertheless, critics of the looting called for cultural objects to be returned to Iraqi museums, failed state notwithstanding. So the anti-repatriation position must look elsewhere for justification.

Perhaps the real force of ICOM's statement resides in the idea that cultural objects are required as much, or more, for cross-cultural learning as they are for individuals learning about their own cultures and developing their own cultural identities. Indeed, the rationale of the educational mission is employed for undercut the force of the claim that cultural objects belong to particular cultures rather than all of humanity.

"call for help" from MacGregor to defend against renewed efforts by the Greek government to regain the Parthenon (a.k.a. Elgin) Marbles from the British Museum, the ICOM issued a "Declaration on the Importance and Value of Universal Museums." Signed by the directors of eighteen world-renowned museums and galleries, the "autocratic" declaration, as some critics have described it, aims to derail repatriation claims by arguing that artifacts that have been in a museum for a long period of time become part of the "heritage of the nations which house them."

When we take a close look at the principles on which MacGregor and the ICOM have criticized the looting of Iraq's museums, however, we notice that those principles conflict with their position on the repatriation issue. Indeed, when we articulate the general norms implicit in condemnation of the looting and turn those norms back onto our own Western practices of cultural appropriation, it becomes clear that those practices fail to satisfy the general principles used to criticize looters.

The duty to protect

In the first place, critics of the looting reveal a commitment to the idea that one's inability to protect one's own art and culture does not entail that others have license to steal that culture. Efforts by MacGregor, the ICOM, the British and American governments and UNESCO indicate that when a people is unable to secure its own culture, others have a duty to assist in that protection. Might does not make right and the duty to guard art and culture is a collective one.

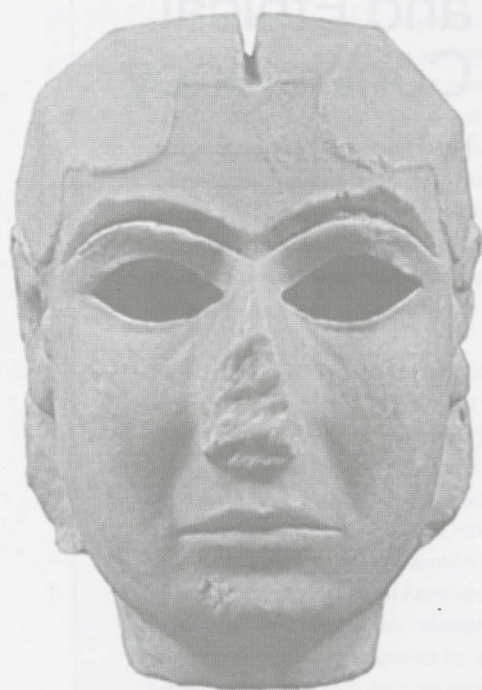
Indeed, that principle was recognized by the

United Nations in The Hague Convention (1954) for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and again by the UN and the arts community itself in the 1970 UNESCO convention, which prohibits the "illicit import, export and transfer of ownership of cultural property." Both of those conventions made the duty to protect cultural treasures a collective responsibility shared by governments, dealers, museums and galleries whether they have ties to the country or culture of origin or not.

But recognition of that principle in these conventions and in the anger over the looting in Iraq has significance for the debate currently raging over the British Museum's refusal to return the Parthenon Marbles to Greece. While the Greek government claims that the marbles were inappropriately taken from the homeland of Greek culture by British treasure-seekers, the British Museum maintains that when the objects were acquired, Greece was not an independent nation. In that context, the deal made between Lord Elgin of Britain and the Ottoman Empire, which then occupied what is now Greece, was legitimate and the British Museum has no obligation to relinquish the treasure.

In committing itself to the principle that inability to protect does not entail a license for others to steal, however, the British Museum's defense against the Greek claim falters. Had Greece not been occupied by the Ottoman Empire and had it been able to protect its cultural heritage it would have done so. The fact that at the time of the Elgin-Ottoman deal Greece was neither an independent nation nor able to protect its cultural heritage not only does not stand up as an excuse for the British Museum, it makes the case for Greek ownership

The institutions of nation-states, rather than those of stateless cultures, are regarded over time as the legitimate owners of cultural objects.



Warka Head. The Baghdad Museum Project. <<http://www.BaghdadMuseum.org/treasures/timlist2.htm>>

Again, however, implicit in the condemnation of the looting are principles that upset the anti-repatriation position. Note, for example, that the ICOM statement expresses "concern over the destruction of the Iraqi heritage" in particular, and not simply the heritage of humanity. Moreover, MacGregor, the ICOM and others demand that the objects not simply be protected but, more significantly, that they be returned to Iraq. If critics genuinely believe that cultural objects matter to humanity as much as they do to the cultures that produced them, then there should be no worry about who owns the objects and how they were acquired. All that matters is whether they are freely and "universally" displayed. In calling for the return of objects to Iraq, however, critics acknowledge that claims of ownership depend on more than just who can display the cultural objects most freely and universally.

While the educational mission of universal museums is to be admired, that mission does not trump a people's need to learn about their own cultural heritage. Without access to our own cultural objects, the development of our self-understandings are impaired and that lies in the face of the sort of recognition of cultural dignity that MacGregor and others seem to want to ensure when they speak of the importance of art objects for the "heritage of nations" and not simply the heritage of humanity. Indeed, if the educational mission is for humanity, then why all the fuss about maintaining "British" ownership of the Parthenon Marbles? The fuss, it seems, comes from an implicit awareness that art objects matter more to particular cultures than they do to humanity as a whole — an awareness that reveals itself in

calls for Iraqi objects to be recovered and returned to Iraq.

For what it's worth, the educational mission can be achieved by means other than those which require British, American or Canadian ownership of foreign art objects. If practices of museum loans, trades and traveling exhibitions have demonstrated anything, it is that we can learn about other cultures without having to appropriate and control the objects and symbols of those cultures ourselves.

Thus, critics implicitly endorse a principle that holds that members of a culture that has produced a culturally meaningful object should have first access to that object. That is not to say that a particular culture should have exclusive access to its own cultural heritage, but rather that there is a presumption in favour of first and primary access for members of the producing culture.

The legitimization of looting

While it is true that some of ancient cultures that produced much of what was stolen from Iraqi museums and archaeological sites no longer exist, the general principles implicit in the reaction to the looting retain their force. Appeal to the fact that the Sumerian culture has disappeared, for example, means only that Sumerian objects constitute a difficult case. That fact does not undermine the force of claims for the repatriation of Iraqi, Greek or Haida objects — that is, claims made for objects produced by cultures that have identifiable contemporary members or descendants. Significantly, these are the claims over which disagreement is most intense, for which guiding principles are most needed and to which the principles examined here apply.

The irony of the official anti-repatriation view is that, over time, it could lead to a legitimization of cultural looting in Iraq.

MacGregor and the ICOM are right that each repatriation claim should be examined on its individual merits and that the context of its acquisition be investigated thoroughly. Moreover, MacGregor deserves praise for his efforts to assist in the preservation and protection of cultural artifacts. Nevertheless, the outrage against the looting in Iraq and the calls for recovery and return of stolen cultural objects reveals a commitment to a set of principles that sits uneasily with the anti-repatriation position.

The irony of the official anti-repatriation view is that, over time, it could lead to a legitimization of cultural looting in Iraq. That is, if locating stolen objects takes too long, Iraq may find itself having to mount costly legal and diplomatic campaigns to convince museums that the very objects that had been stolen from Iraq should be returned to Iraq. No doubt most museums that find looted Iraqi treasures in the next few years will return them, but will they be so ready to return objects that they find in their basements fifty or a hundred years from now? By that time will the once-looted objects have become part of the "heritage of the nations which house them?"

If the absurdity of that possibility resonates with museum directors and cultural elites, as it

should if their statements about Iraqi looting are sincere, then they should recognize their duty to return objects like the Parthenon Marbles to institutions closer to the originating cultures. Anything less than that would reveal museum directors who criticize Iraqi looting to be inconsistent at best, and objectionably opportunistic at worst.

The nineteenth-century British liberal John Stuart Mill was only half right when he wrote that "no one is a better judge of one's own interests than oneself." He should have added that one's own interests should have to stand up against the same principles that one uses to judge others. Only in that way can we ensure that we treat others as we ourselves would like to be treated. But like other British intellectuals of his day, Mill defended British colonialism on the grounds that some "barbarian" peoples are unsuited for self-government. One can only hope that we have moved beyond the double standards of nineteenth-century British colonialism and that we strive to achieve consistency between our actions and our principles.

Daniel Munro is a Toronto-based political and cultural theorist. He is currently a lecturer in political philosophy at the University of Western Ontario.



Image from the Elgin Collection. I. Jenkins. *The Parthenon Frieze*. London: The British Museum Press, 1994

sound.bytes

g. g. : Well now, you've been quoted as saying that your involvement with recording – with media in general, indeed – represents an involvement with the future.

Glenn Gould ¹

We don't play music, we play programming.

Marshall McLuhan ²

FUCK ART

by tobias c. van Veen



LET'S DANCE

The author @ Plush 1998, Vancouver. Photo: Jane Weitzel. All images this article courtesy the author.

WHAT DOES "POP" OR "AVANT-GARDE" MEAN IN A CONTEXT THAT IS AFROFUTURIST?

rhythm.smitten

In 1937, John Cage was all ears:

Percussion music is a contemporary transition from keyboard-influenced music to the all-sound music of the future. Any sound is acceptable to the composer of percussion music; he explores the academically forbidden "non-musical" field of sound insofar as is manually possible.

Methods of writing percussion music have as their goal the rhythmic structure of a composition. As soon as these methods are crystallized into one or several widely accepted methods, the means will exist for group improvisations of unwritten but culturally important music. This has already taken place in Oriental cultures and in hot jazz.³

What Cage heard was rhythm — a hot rhythm of percussion, and later, like Glenn Gould, a rhythm of computer recorded and generated sound. But today, rhythm is not the mark of the "new" music. Rhythm is rather the hallmark of pop music, and arrhythmic composition — including Cage's own pioneering random chance operations — the stamp of high-art.

How, then, to fund techno? Or, rather: is it surprising that techno, house, jungle, IDM and other rhythmic, innovative and experimental electronic music is barely recognised as "art," if

at all? How do I explain that Detroit Techno, oft misunderstood, is the electronic heir to not only Kraftwerk, but to Sun Ra's jazz? (The releases of Detroit's *Underground Resistance* (UR) make this clear as the black night.) Or that Chicago house — the extension of disco as the Sonic Church — is a place of incorporeal worship, artistic sacrifice? What does "pop" or "avant-garde" mean in a context that is *AfroFuturist*? Oh, rhythm, you are not of Western Art Music ... rhythm you are of the body ... and this body knows nothing of pop/high-art territories. Nobodies do.

The Canada Council, although open to all applications including those from experimental electronic musicians, has stated that "house" and "techno" music are not its "domain." From an email in response to Christine McLean of AEMusic/Someoneelse, a lobby organisation for Canadian electronic musicians:

Frankly, we just aren't going there right now, and may not ever end up funding in this area. As you know, this is new territory for the Canada Council and we are educating ourselves, but I am confident in saying that techno and house is very unlikely to be funded by the Council. I really believe this is the domain of our colleagues at FACTOR.⁴

Let us consider FACTOR. At Mutek 2002, the Montreal international festival of experimental electronic music, a panel was held

with representatives from the Canada Council and FACTOR. While the Canada Council revealed that it knew experimental electronic musicians — composers of minimal techno, micro-house, IDM, ambient, glitch/microsound, drill-core jungle and so forth — were acknowledged but often excluded from receiving grants, FACTOR revealed it was simply not set-up to properly fund electronic music production. Simply, most experimental electronic releases are quantitatively *too small* to be funded by FACTOR. In fact, a successful 12" is usually 500–1000 copies — about the same numbers for electroacoustic albums. While electroacoustic music is recognisably funded by the Canada Council (after its own series of struggles to achieve recognition), innovative and experimental forms of techno, house and other electronic music of the rhythmic variety — and thus, apparently, the "pop" nation — are often directed to FACTOR.

But FACTOR provides loans, not grants. And loans are little good when they are structured to fund a recording studio and a self-produced demo — the tactics and requirements of a rock band, not of the electronic musician, many of whom require a laptop and software, not a studio and roadie. A demo is designed to sign a band to a label, and thus reap the cash to pay back the loans. Electronic music doesn't *factor* this way.

Moreover, to assume that electronic music is commercially viable in the same pattern as rock



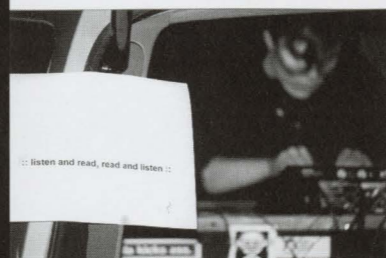
Donald Glaude @ Plush 1998, Vancouver. Photo: Jane Weitzel.

music — via radio airplay and MuchMusic rotation — ignores the qualitative differences, the very challenges that the AfroFuturist soundwave and the electronic earsplit unleash on the music industry. The *mutant* industry, constantly in a state of movement ...

As Will Straw spun in 1991, *movement-music* cultures not only "value the redirective and the novel over the stable and the canonical," but, unlike rock, flip "the lines of fracture" which run through audiences and producers into "the bases of that music's own ongoing development."⁵

Genetic genre splicing won't factor.

During the panel, frustrations became evident, highlighted by electro-star Tiga's tirade on the lack of homegrown support for a Canadian electronic music scene that, predictably, has found its success elsewhere. "A new territory for the Canada Council" has been very much deterritorialized by a networked and globalized electronic music scene that has come to realise that the nation-state is failing to provide the supportive structures necessary for the cultural industries to survive. Either one is a pop artist — and thus sequencing for the lowest common denominator — or *unpopular*, as a member of the artistic elite. Remix the point: it's not about



Forest Green @ qork/oddy 1998, Vancouver. Photo: tobias van Veen.

rhythm.spinden

the *popular*. We can see that in the numbers released. As Aimé Dontigny of the experimental No Type label states, "the difference lies not in 'popularity' but in the 'commercial intent' of the project."⁶

While Tiga's releases arguably *are* electronic pop, they also play the ambiguity of the divide.⁷ And it is perhaps because the reception is non-existent for encouraging experimental *electronic* forays born from rhythm and non-High-Art Tradition that, in order to survive, Canadian electronic musicians — and here I speak specifically of those working with rhythm — are continually pressured to produce in *consumer-music* domains in order to sell, or to produce "art music" to receive funding.⁸ Today, the binary of high/low art is a construction of the funding bodies; the wired world sees the production of sound as a market distinction, consumerable or non-consumerable. Any judgment of funding based upon high/low art value is drawing its power from another record, for the numbers spin another tale. But before we scratch the analysis, we should learn from the struggles of electroacoustic music in having its practitioners recognised as *composers*. Dontigny continues:

In the last fifteen years, new music practitioners have done a lot to force public agencies to update their terminology and program objectives, especially on expanding the definitions of "composer" and "composition" to reflect

the realities of improvisers and self-taught electronic composers.⁹

From these efforts arose the National New Music Coalition (NNMC). While the welcome and inclusive NNMC is striving to incorporate all forms of "new" electronic music, the emphasis is primarily on electronic *composers*. Working with the definition of *composition*, a tradition of the artist is reinstated on a terrain that is, on the other channel, continually being rewired at the limits of compositional practice via the practices of turntablism, sampling, filesharing, copyleft and networked performance, around debates of laptop performance, and via the histories of Afro-Futurist and non-Western sound that operate via parameters that are exterior to the compositional framework. Not the factors but the *fractures* of electronic music propel its numerous identities as exterior to traditional stages.

The experimental *composer* also benefits — via institutionalization — from the benefits of a university support system. Although Dontigny disagrees on this point, and claims that the networking of clubs provides electronic musicians with a sustainable market while the university does not, it remains easier to facilitate grants for institutionalized electroacoustic music, or *composed* music. To attempt to try and *produce* experimental electronic music by receiving grants for such production, as a full-time practitioner, or to *produce* the events and

THE AFROFUTURIST SOUND RICOCHETS RHYTHMS FOR CYBORGS, SPINS LOVE REFRAINS FOR A RACED AND GENDERED, INCORPOREAL YET EMBODIED POSTHUMANITY.

(club) "nights" required to support the practice "within the market," is all but financially untenable. While all forms of New Music have their concert halls and departments, the commercial and cutthroat atmosphere of the club will not tolerate techno, house, IDM or jungle that deviates from the commercial norm. Drinks must be sold: while *consumerable* music draws large numbers in clubs (such as *progressive trance* and other commercially-driven genres), the experimental and AfroFuturist mixes and their offshoots are shut out from spaces for sonic exploration. *Space IS the place*.

What is needed is a recognition of the in-between or liminal status of experimental electronic music among institutional knowledges and practices as well as within the funding bodies. Neither electroacoustic nor the domain of New Music, neither with commercial intent or consumerable, experimental electronic music has yet produced pinnacle moments in unique sonic achievement of the last Century and into the Aughts, and by all accounts is the challenge the AfroFuturist narrative offers to the transcendent virtual narratives of the dot-com era, the claims to the bodiless perfection of cyberspace. The AfroFuturist sound ricochets rhythms for cyborgs, spins love refrains for a raced and gendered, incorporeal yet embodied posthumanity. Rhythm is movement excluded from colonial histories of Music, like all histories of the body, especially the coloured body.

In failing to acknowledge the artistic elements of rhythmic electronic music, several structures of aesthetic value are put into replay. The ascendancy of non-rhythmic or "difficult" music is ascribed to the unpopular, and thus, the aesthetically *valued* (by funding and by the pantheon of "high art"). "(Un)Popularity" becomes the criterion of Art. AfroFuturist rhythms of the dancing-body are negated in favour of an arrhythmic and colourless, genderless "avant-garde." The sounds of percussion, those noises of the body — that "hot jazz" and those "Oriental cultures" — are not heard.

It is possible that the tactics of *circulatory production* herald a new politics (and a new political). Also a new sense of *production*. We all know the turntablist & sampler, but now we speak of the networks of sound-sharing and the sound of networks. La Société Anonyme: "The artist as producer intervenes, more and more, in the real time of the dominion of experience, not in the deferred time of representation... More and more, the artist is a producer of liveness..."¹⁰

Rhythm in a much broader sense than simply that of timed music.

Rhythm echoes in the sense that Derrick May pronounces "Rhythim Is Rhythim"¹¹ and that Deleuze and Guattari say that "Rhythm is the milieus' answer to chaos," and that "what chaos and rhythm have in common is the in-

between — between two milieus, rhythm-chaos or the chaosmos".¹² This is in stark contrast to an "avant-garde" — and here we mean not an artistic elite, or even a truly groundbreaking crew of headz, but the power structures that *materially define the term today* — which still pronounce rhythm as a simple music structure that seduces the listener from a "higher appreciation" of non-rhythmic sound to the dark and questionable world of dance-infused listening events...

We have much to owe to rhythm. We are in debt to what is a pragmatic and joyful — yet "political" — deconstruction of the sitting, listening, audience (ensconced in their chairs, the "proper" place of music appreciation).

Spin the refrain: the force of John Cage's hearing lesson has not yet scratched the record of history — nor the funding structures that support Canadian artists.

tobias c. van Veen is a sound & net.artist, techno-turntablist, and writer, and is author of the _2003 Canadian Electronic Music Directory_. He has been enmeshed with musikal resistance cultures (i.e., raising shit) since 1993.



UNDERGROUND RESISTANCE IS A LABEL FOR A MOVEMENT.
A MOVEMENT THAT WANTS CHANGE BY SONIC REVOLUTION.
WE URGE YOU TO JOIN THE RESISTANCE AND HELP US TO COMBAT
THE MEDIOCRE AUDIO AND VISUAL PROGRAMMING
THAT IS BEING FED TO THE INHABITANTS OF EARTH.
THIS PROGRAMMING IS STAGNATING THE MINDS OF THE PEOPLE.
BUILDING A WALL BETWEEN RACES AND PREVENTING WORLD PEACE.
IT IS THIS WALL WE ARE GOING TO SMASH.
BY USING THE UNTAPPED ENERGY POTENTIAL OF SOUND
WE ARE GOING TO DESTROY THIS WALL.
MUCH THE SAME AS CERTAIN FREQUENCIES SHATTER GLASS.
TECHNO IS A MUSIC BASED IN EXPERIMENTATION.
IT IS SACRED TO NO ONE RACE. IT HAS NO DEFINITIVE SOUND.
IT IS MUSIC FOR THE FUTURE OF THE HUMAN RACE.
WITHOUT THIS MUSIC THERE WILL BE NO PEACE. NO LOVE. NO VISION.
BY SIMPLY COMMUNICATING THROUGH SOUND,
TECHNO HAS BROUGHT PEOPLE OF ALL DIFFERENT NATIONALITIES
TOGETHER UNDER ONE ROOF TO ENJOY THEMSELVES.
ISN'T IT OBVIOUS THAT MUSIC AND DANCE
ARE THE KEYS TO THE UNIVERSE?
SO CALLED PRIMITIVE ANIMALS AND TRIBAL HUMANS
HAVE KNOWN THIS FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS!
WE URGE ALL BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF THE UNDERGROUND
TO CREATE AND TRANSMIT THEIR TONES AND FREQUENCIES
NO MATTER HOW SO CALLED PRIMITIVE THEIR EQUIPMENT MAY BE.
TRANSMIT THESE TONES AND WREAK HAVOC ON THE PROGRAMMERS!

LONG LIVE THE UNDERGROUND...

Above: The creed of *Underground Resistance*, Detroit.
<<http://www.undergroundresistance.com/creed.html>>

Opposite Page: *Underground Resistance*, Detroit.
<<http://www.undergroundresistance.com>>

Notes

1 "Glen Gould Interviews Glen Gould About Glen Gould."

<http://www.gould.nlc-bnc.ca/docs/ehf.htm>

2 *Medium Is the Message*. CD.

<http://www.webcorp.com/sounds/mcquote.htm>

3 "The Future of Music: Credo." *Silence: Lectures and Writings by John Cage*. Hanover: Wesleyan UP, 1973. p. 5.

4 This quote has been provided to the producer by Christine McLean.

5 "Communities and Scenes in Popular Music." In *The Subcultures Reader*. Eds. Ken Gelder and Sarah Thornton. London: Routledge, 1997. p. 500, 502.

6 Email to the remixer, 6.9.03.

7 Tiga's most well-known hit, the *Sunglasses EP* on International Deejay Gigolos, samples (Canadian) Cory Hart's classic, "Sunglasses at Night," to a revivalist, retro-electro beat. It went Top 40 in most of Europe, although this has more to do with interpenetration in the pop/underground music divide in the EU that is nonetheless sustained by commercialised and corporate rap, R'n'B and rock hegemony in North America.

8 David Turgeon, one of the owners of experimental label No Type, posted to the microsound.org email list the following observation (6/7/03): "What i do know is that 'music with beat' is just as eligible as anything else to a CCA grant, but it has to make sense as some sort of avant-garde or contemporary composition. David Kristian's *Room Rone* (which is pretty 4/4 at times, if very murkily so), for example, has been awarded a CCA grant. I understand that they will more likely give a grant to a more typically 'non-popular' composition (i.e. without beat & melody) which is basically a risk investment for a label. As a matter of fact, a few months ago

No Type sent out three grants applications to the CCA (for future Canadian artist releases) and only one was accepted: — interestingly enough, the least accessible of the three."

9 Ibid.

10 "Redefinition of Artistic Practices in the Twenty-First Century (LSA47)." *Parachute* 109. p. 134.

11 May is one of the artistic pioneers of techno born from Detroit. His track "Rhythim is Rhythim" (note the spelling) is considered to be one of the classics of the "First Wave" from the mid-to-late '80s, fusing funk and cold drum programming in a melancholic yet strangely revelatory oasis of kicks, high-hats and synthesizer.

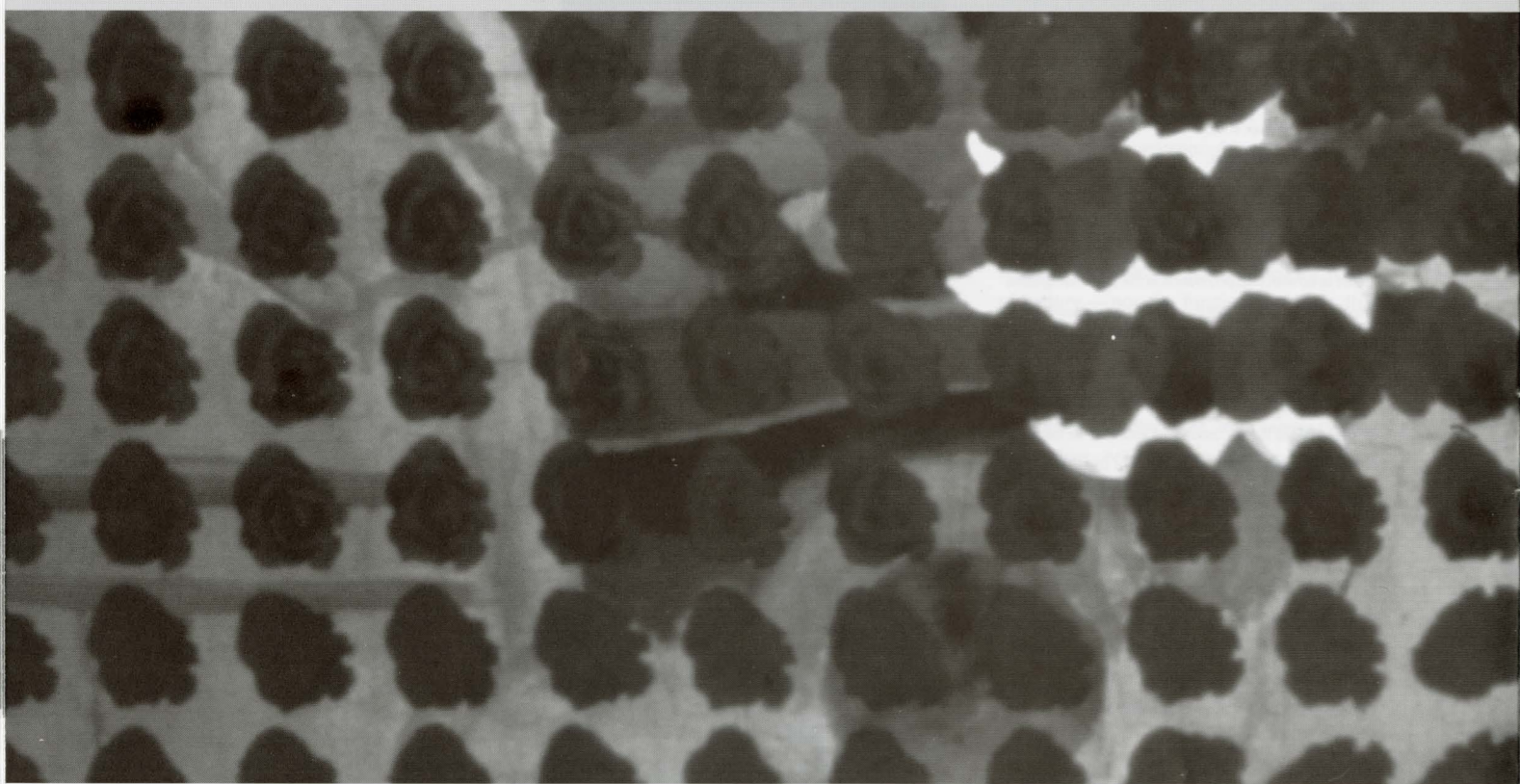
12 *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Trans. Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1987. p. 313.





The Seeds of Disruption

by Mark J. Jones



Love is Eternal for as Long as it Lasts, Rashid Rana, 2000, painting detail. Courtesy: SAVAC.

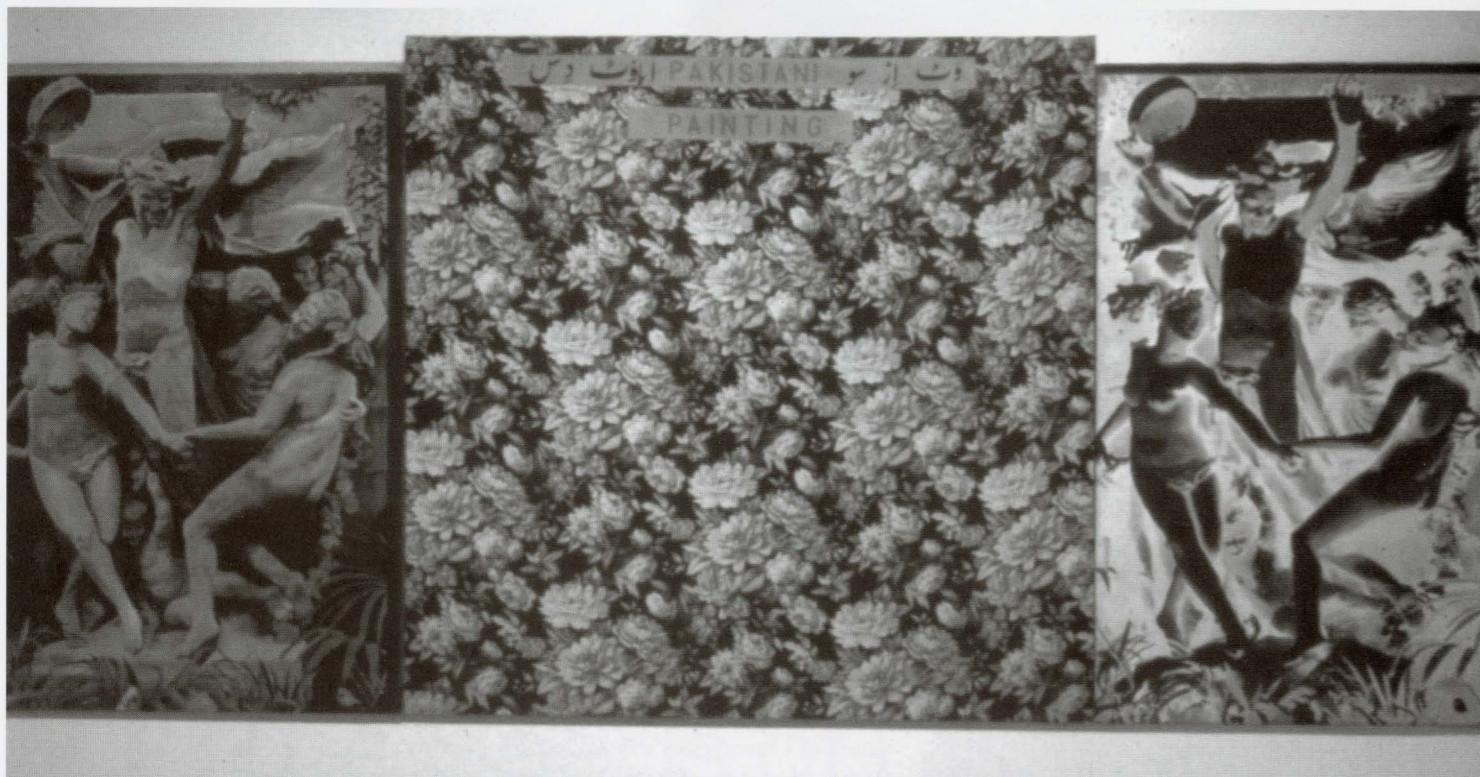
Recently, while taking a shaky train from Toronto to Ottawa, I was caught off guard by something I happened to glance at out the window. There, as we whizzed along the sandy landscape, hugging the shoreline of Lake Ontario, was the Pickering nuclear power plant, with a single lonely wind turbine on its grounds, turning in the wind.

It took me a moment to grasp what I saw: what was a wind turbine doing in front of a nuclear power plant? It wasn't like one little wind turbine could contribute very much power compared to what the nuclear plant could produce. It was clearly more symbolic than practical — its placement, as a source of “natural power,” within the space of this behemoth product of industrial culture, which produces as much radioactive waste as it does juice to power our air conditioners. Its turning propellers appeared to me like hands constantly waving to passers-by in a desperate plea to be noticed, those of a lost child trying to get the attention of its parent in the distance. Although it generated power, its presence in this context was a disruption of commonly held notions of power, an effect reinforced even more here in post-blackout Ontario. From the distance it might have come across as an artist's installation, as opposed to a token of green political posturing

on the part of the recently defunct government of the Ontario Conservatives.

Still, it got me thinking that any disruption deliberately placed in the cultural and political landscape makes an *artistic* intervention; that in the intentional imposing expression of images and ideas, an abrupt negotiation takes place, one that asks the unsuspecting onlooker to “consider this.” There really is little difference between negotiation and disruption, one is just more polite — dare I say “Canadian” — than the other. Each demands pause, and in the moment of that pause, a tension occurs in which a reorganization of thought might transpire. Perhaps, as in the case of my moment with the wind turbine, such a negotiation is made all the more interesting when it takes its audience by surprise.

In the summer of 2002, I attended an exhibition presented by SAVAC, the South Asian Visual Arts Collective, at the Harbourfront Centre in Toronto, entitled “Painting Over the Lines: Five Contemporary Artists from Pakistan.” Produced by the IndoCenter of Art & Culture in New York City, it featured the works of artists Hamra Abbas, Sylvat Aziz, Rashid Rana, Ali Raza and Risham Syed. According to co-curator Karin Miller-Lewis, “All [the artists in the show] were concerned with



What is so Pakistani about this Painting? Rashid Rana, 2000. Courtesy: SAVAC.

the political and cultural climate of urban Pakistan, the way its citizens receive and respond to the tensions between past and present, internal and external pressures, traditional and critical aesthetic languages.”

The work of one of the artists in the show, Rashid Rana’s, strikes one as particularly representative of this notion of disruption and negotiation. A visual artist, he divides his time between Canada and Pakistan, where he is a faculty member at the prestigious National College of Art in Lahore. His paintings are multilayered and present a kind of visual trick, one that is laden with both aesthetic and cultural meaning. Working with images inspired by popular culture and film in Pakistan, a single work of Rana’s can comprise what appear to be several paintings superimposed on top of each other on the same canvas, each layer with its own potential reading, but collectively creating fascinating juxtapositions.

In his painting *Love is Eternal for as Long as it Lasts*, for instance, an image of a romantic

scene is covered with crowded rows of greeting-card-inspired roses, obstructing the view of the scene underneath. Layered onto the roses are the words “Love is eternal” in English, while beneath it “For as long as it lasts” is written in Urdu, the Urdu read from right to left. Each layer on its own contains highly romantic, stereotypical icons from popular culture. But layered on top of each other, they frustrate and get in the way of one another.

In another, *Face to Face*, what at first appears to be a negative of a single frame from a Pakistani film, suggesting a use of photography, actually reveals itself to be a painted representation of the negative. In still other pieces, he uses actual photography to suggest a three-dimensional object within a two-dimensional painted landscape.

Between jaunts between Toronto, New York and Lahore, Rana writes to me about this: “Historically, the major distinction between the two-dimensional arts of the East and the West

has been the illusionist and the non-illusionist approach, respectively. In the search for identity in the post-colonial era, various artists with Pakistani roots have tried different approaches. One approach has been to revive tradition by opting for non-illusionist space in their paintings.” He says that by painting a filmic image in its negative form, for example, the work doesn’t just disrupt everyday notions of certain images, such as using green as the colour for blood as opposed to red. It also implies a duality of meaning as a result of the flatness of that negative image, in contrast to the representational three-dimensional space of film. “I like this duality, which allows me to deal with this question of identity in a more honest way.”

In disrupting the senses, it strikes me that his work, like my initial reaction to the wind turbine, disrupts easy assumptions as to the “nature” of experience, and the social and political meanings behind it. Rana’s work turns classical (representational) relationships of his chosen media on their head suggesting a theme that might be described as “the illusion of the illusion.” It isn’t a cruel trick, but rather one that asks the viewer to “consider this.” One writer once referred to Rana’s objective as not to deceive, but to awaken viewers to the dynamic and uncertain cultural conditions of Pakistan.

Contemporary Pakistan is, as Miller-Lewis describes, “A country in transition. Tipping on the edge of chaos, more like it, though Americans shield their eyes. And the urban, elite Pakistanis seem awfully adept at living with, in, between profound societal rifts, at the risk of their own peril. I think many if not all the artists in the show were keenly aware of this troubling fact.” She notes that the gulfs that threatened Pakistan’s stability a year ago are only greater today, but that both Pakistanis and their new American “allies” engage in a willful ignorance of the situation: “Don’t you wonder why Pakistan has been invisible in the newspapers?”

Quddus Mirza, a painter living in Lahore, writes in the program booklet for “Painting Over the Lines” that after the collapse of the Soviet Union, material gain became increasingly important in Pakistani society, and that this

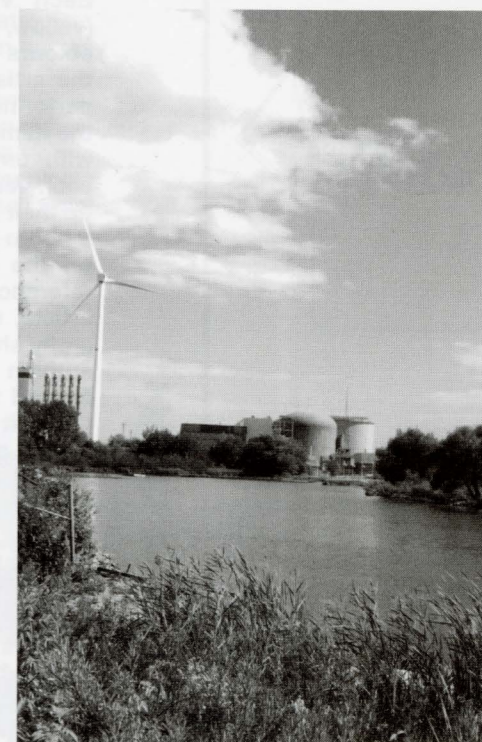
materialism became entrenched both in political ideologies and in the world of ideas. In art, he notes, the inclusion of objects from “functional” art — plastic toys, movie posters, household items — parallels what he calls “the redundancy of ideology in politics and society.” The fact that materialism and a willful blindness to its destructive societal components works its ways into politics, culture, media and even our own families is a theme familiar to any artist.

If the placement of the wind turbine in front of the nuclear power plant was more than just a convenient location for it to be close to the power grid, then it is also a political intervention, one that no doubt is rooted in environmental activism, in spite of politicians’ need to rewrite histories of activism in the name of public relations. Its presence visually disrupts the understanding of electrical and political power that has worked its way so deeply into industrial ideology. One wind turbine may not generate much compared to a nuclear plant, but this one can still provide enough electricity to light six hundred homes.

If artists like the ones in “Painting Over the Lines” are examples of people who make artistic contributions that disrupt the ideologies of their societies and ours, that ask us to “consider this,” then they are lighting *many more* homes. In spite of the complexities and conditions encountered in their domestic environments, none of these artists choose to desert them, but rather to reflect on and question those conditions, both for themselves and us.

They appear to have to chosen such challenges by engaging within their homelands, their institutions, perhaps even their own families, knowing full well that the politics in each of these places can be divisive. To place such “seeds of disruption” into each of those spaces, to be to willing to create tensions that challenge clichés and ideologies, is as much an act of love as it is art.

Mark J. Jones is a new media artist, project manager and writer, and is currently chair of InterAccess Electronic Media Arts Centre in Toronto.



Pickering Wind Turbine and Nuclear Reactor. Photo: Mark Jones.

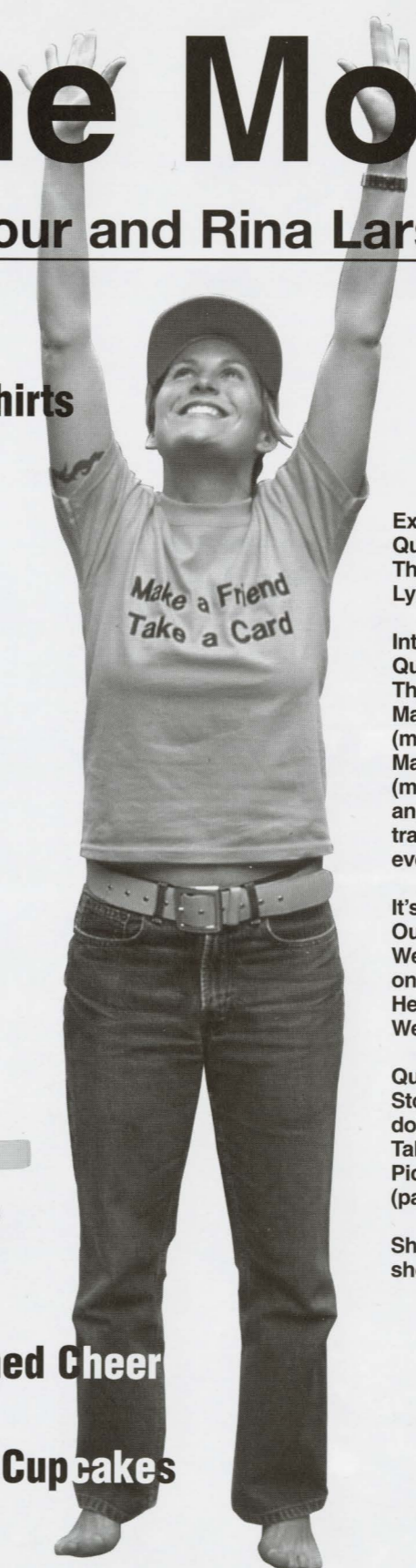
Queers on the Move

Public Performances by Toni Latour and Rina Larsson



Queers on the Move/The Make Friends Project consisted of four public performances in conjunction with the Out on Screen festival at four venues located in various parts of Vancouver. Programming director Michael Barrett opened the festival guide stating, "As...the world seems more and more uncertain and we become more isolated...many of us are seeking refuge in a place of community — a place to share our joys and concerns with one another." His words were borne out in a festival of "celebratory...life affirming queer images" including cupcake wielding artists out to make friends.

Each venue was colour coded (yellow, green, pink or blue). These colours were echoed in the t-shirts the artist wore and the mats they performed on. With hats featuring the name of the project and t-shirts with embroidered text tailored to each venue, Latour and Larsson set up their mat, a stand for leaflets and a boom box that played the Queers on the Move theme. Humorously referencing local and national queer artists, writers and films, and jubilantly shouting "Make Friends," the anthem played as the artists performed their choreographed cheer. Once it ended the artists offered their audience free cupcakes topped with pink icing, a flag and a reminder to "Make a Friend Today!"



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Theaters
Sets of T-Shirts
Hats

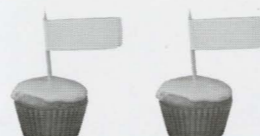
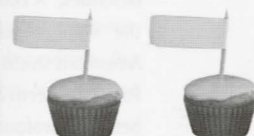
Excerpt from:
Queers on the Move/
The Make Friends Project
Lyrics, music and vocals by Toni Latour

Introducing
Queers on the Move
The Make Friends Project
Make friends
(make friends with les-bians)
Make friends
(make friends with les-bians)
and gay, bi, 2-spirited,
transgendered and queer people
everywhere

It's the make friends project at
Out on Screen
We're on the move and we're
on the scene
Here we are, we're here to stay
We're at the show, we're on our way

Queer films go to big screens
Stories of dykes and big old queens and
don't forget the in-betweens
Tales of femmes, tales of trannies
Pictures of butches, with their fannies
(packs that is)

Shows to remember,
shows to remember...

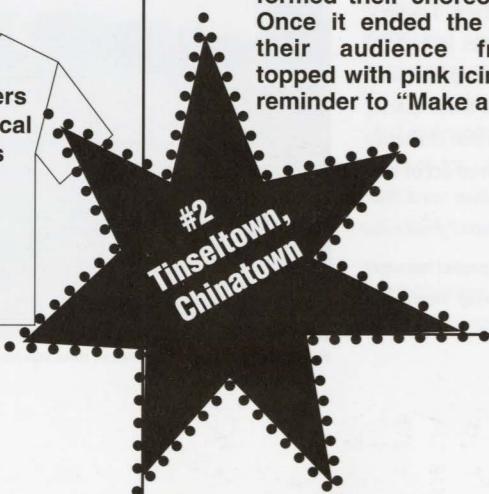


1
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Choreographed Cheer
Song
Batches of Cupcakes

at Out on Screen:

Vancouver's Film & Video Festival



The Make

Friends Project

Inadvertent Monuments, Ilana Salama Ortar and Stephen Wright, 2003. Courtesy: the artists.



“Land without Soil, Art without Artwork”

**Interview with
Ilana Salama Ortar and
Stephen Wright**

by Hanadi Loubani and Sara Matthews

“Will,” a transnational art exhibition, was held at A Space Gallery in Toronto, Ontario from June 19 to July 19, 2003. It was one cultural event among fourteen that comprised Negotiations: From A Piece of Land to A Land of Piece. “Will” showcased seven collaborative artworks that responded to the historical and ongoing repressive Israeli occupation of Palestine. In the original call for projects, we asked artists, academics and activists to envision ways in which transdisciplinary artistic practices could disseminate socially creative strategies for shaping new parameters for peace in Palestine–Israel. We were interested in creative strategies that could figure, both ethically and pragmatically, socially responsible practices of solidarity and inventive approaches to labouring across divides. We contend that such practices are capable of shifting and rearticulating the discourses on peace and security from prefigured roadmaps “towards existing and emerging practices of shared entitlement and common responsibility for co-existence in Palestine–Israel.”

The works in the exhibit responded eloquently and powerfully to the vision we had laid out. Each piece explored uniquely creative means through which transdisciplinary artistic practices can engage in, as well as generate, ethically responsible modes for negotiation. To this extent, the artworks did more than merely document the history of the collaborative process between artists, activist and academics. Emerging through intense negotiations and co-labouring, each artwork exceeded conventional practices of representational art by demanding active participation in shaping the possibility for new configurations of social relations that transcend the historical dynamics of colonial oppression. Inundated by the tensions that are constitutive of any and all collaborative efforts, each work engaged these tensions while remaining firmly grounded in their resistance to the repressive realities of life under occupation. The artworks in this exhibit laid a claim on the political while at the same time opening that space to dialogic exchanges. These exchanges aimed at a productive engagement with tensions, differences and conflicts rather than their erasure. The effect of organizing artwork as a practice of dialogic exchange was the cultivation of conditions within which debates regarding the *how* of ethical politics of solidarity with the Palestinian struggle could be engaged. Calling upon art to answer the demands of political action is no small task, yet each of these works pursued the question of how

can art intervene in the political, while surpassing the rhetoric of what makes a “political art.”

The collaborative endeavor between Israeli artist Ilana Salama Ortar and Paris-based theorist Stephen Wright explores the problematic of historical memory from the vantage [point] of land, place and identity. Ilana Salama Ortar is a Tel Aviv–based artist whose practice in painting, drawing, film, photography and installation spans two decades. Her work concerns the development of a civic art that “explores the visible and invisible traces of the erasure of individual and collective memory in the urban fabric.” Stephen Wright is an independent curator, critic, translator and theorist of art-related practice. His vast geography of interests includes the status of art’s “use value” in differing geopolitical contexts. Their contribution to the Negotiations event took the form of a multimedia installation, entitled *Inadvertent Monuments: the geopolitics of perception*, as part of the “Will” exhibit at A Space and the screening of Ortar’s short experimental documentary, *Adamut/Land*, during their moderated panel discussion, “Land without Soil, Art without Artwork.”

Inadvertent Monuments: the geopolitics of perception occupied four glass-fronted vitrines located in the corridor outside A Space. Comprised of images and text, the installation documents the history of Ortar’s excavation of the history of a stone border cairn that was constructed after World War I to separate the French mandate of Lebanon from the British mandate of Palestine. To solemnize this arbitrary partition, or at least to provide it with some sort of locally tangible evidence, authorities built a border cairn out of stone. The images in the installation bear witness to this moment in colonial history — a lone pillar of stones dominates an otherwise barren landscape. A monument to this partition, the cairn speaks for itself. Whilst an innocuous relic, it is nevertheless a sign of imperial powers’ “Will” decreed and celebrated in the far away offices of Whitehall and Quai d’Orsay. As the viewer moves between the four assemblages, another narrative emerges: during the latest phase of the Israeli occupation of South Lebanon (1982–2000), and under the protection of the Tsahal, workmen acting under Israeli state protection, if not indeed on direct orders, dug up layers of top soil from vast tracts of South Lebanese occupied land and took it by

dump trucks to settlements and orchards in the north of Israel. The installation’s text relates that:

... the stone cairn, whose bottom half was deeply entrenched in the earth, now stands some eight feet above the ground. While the stones that make up its top portion are the same light tan colour as the surrounding topography, the bottom three feet are a dark ruddy brown — identical to the soil once covering them. Intended as a horizontal territorial marker, the cairn has come to mark verticality — raising a variety of issues regarding the difference between land and soil, territory and earth. It is an inadvertent monument. As such, it stands as a condensed metaphor of the conflict embedded in the historical present; a public mirror for anyone who cares to look at the issue of peace and partition not as event but as sign ... Geopolitics have positioned it so as to make it intangible, bracketing it off and creating the power of display a museum gives to an art object. This land-art-like — though unsigned an unintentional — object functions like art, though it is obviously not an artwork ... The cairn incorporates its own memory. It no longer stakes out a presence but depicts an absence.

In the shifting of the landmark’s operative axis from the horizontal to the vertical, the border cairn demarcates not only intrusion into territory, but also incursion into the earth itself — stripping one land of its soil and endowing another land with stolen arable soil. Soil theft, as Ortar and Wright cogently remark, pales in comparison with the other more repressive practices and lethal consequences of occupation. And yet, the symbolic aspect of the testimonial is undeniable. “It is ironic that everything in the landscape has shifted except the cairn,” write Ortar and Wright. “Initially the most arbitrary and incongruous feature of all, it has ended up being the yardstick against which to measure changes in land use and meaning.” The often-assumed seamless link between land and soil, territory and earth has been ruptured. The consequences for collective identities rooted in such concepts are far graver. As an inadvertent monument, the cairn acts as a sort of a public mirror that challenges viewers living in partitioned times and within partitioned paradigms to ask new and different questions about the relationships between self and other, identity and difference. Indeed Ortar asserts that, “the moment that I discovered this soil theft, the landscape that symbolized all of my youth



Whilst an innocuous relic, it is nevertheless a sign of imperial powers’ “Will” decreed and celebrated in the far away offices of Whitehall and Quai d’Orsay.

Inadvertent Monuments
Ilana Salama Ortar and
Stephen Wright. 2003.
Installation detail.
Photo: Babak Salari.

suddenly betrayed me ... This is not my soil, so where am I as an Israeli citizen? I don't know ... This is a question that I would like everyone to ask of themselves."

Contesting the geography of our partitioned times, Ortar and Wright's *Inadvertent Monuments* further refuses to be partitioned within the traditional disciplinary territories of art practice. Ortar and Wright's collaboration is based on what they term "an extra-disciplinary approach to art." Such an approach contests interdisciplinary paradigms that accept as *a priori* disciplinary partitioning as a precondition for association. What emerges from their approach is the privileging of art-related practice (the *work of art*) over the production of an artwork that bears the authority of artistic authorship. As an unauthored artwork, the cairn is the sign of an absence not only of soil, but also of responsibility: for soil theft; for the production of absence; for the histories of partitioning. *Inadvertent Monuments* attempts to excavate this process of partitioning and its trace in the historical present. What remains to be excavated exceeds the question of what the Negotiations working group conceived of as "the common responsibilities for co-existence in Palestine-Israel" and focuses instead what we would like to call the *discontinuous responsibilities* that each of us, artist and viewer, must shoulder depending on our different locations in these partitioned times. By no means specific to *Inadvertent Monuments*, this question can be put to the entirety of the Negotiations event. Nonetheless, it is due to initiatives such as Ortar and Wright's, that these questions are raised.

Interview

Hanadi Loubani/Sara Matthews: Ilana, what sort of questions are you trying to raise with your art practice?

Ilana Salama Ortar: The basic question is what can I, as an Israeli artist, make of this impossible situation in which we are living in Israel? In what ways can I open alternative paths to dialogue? For me, the basic way is to work on excavating hidden or erased memories from both sides of the conflict. This project — the border cairn — becomes for me a sort of mirror for Israeli society. The maximum that I can accomplish as an artist is to confront Israeli society with the invisible history of such a place.

HL/SM: How did you become interested in working on this project?

ISW: It was in 2000, three years ago. I was in Paris when I heard about this problem of soil theft from the south of Lebanon to the north of Israel. I was shocked. And as I was shocked, as I feel the constant pain of what is going on in Israel, I wondered what I could do as an artist. I felt I had to do something — I am an artist!

So I came back from Paris — shocked — to Israel. I was investigating this story that I had heard. Of course, it was not in Israel that I found out about this soil theft. I had to be in Paris in order to hear [about] it. Nonetheless, I returned to Israel determined to research the subject. I succeeded in finding out, through friends, the name of a man who lived in Golan Heights — the territory annexed by Israel. I went to see this man and he told me that he personally removed the soil — which he did in order to make a living, to survive. This was another shock for me. How could an Arab work against his identity like that? All of these issues combined made me want to articulate this project.

I went to the Golan Heights to visit this man. Of course, we could not pass the border into Lebanon, so we stood on the verge of the border looking at the land where the soil was stolen. At this moment I saw the border cairn and I asked him what it was. He told me the whole story. As I was looking, I could see a huge monument of stone with different colours — the upper layers were like ochre whereas the lower levels a ruddy brown. I thought to myself: this is the soil of South Lebanon. This visual contrast — the changing colours of the stone — resonated with me as a painter and pushed me to conceptualize the project. The other aspects of the project involved making the experimental film about the experience and photographing the stone cairn. I had to use a telescopic lens since, of course, I couldn't cross the border. I was only able to cross the border through the act of photography. These are the photographs that you can see in the exhibition. As an artist who is concerned with civic art, the other component of the project was doing the historical research at Tel Aviv University. They have the newspapers from all over the Middle East. I read all of the Lebanese papers against the same dates in the Israeli papers to get an idea of how they were both reporting on the issue of the soil theft. What I discovered was that the Lebanese knew of the problem but the Israeli

press ignored it. The work in the archive was like searching for something — I am not exactly sure what — but I will know it when I find it.

Stephen Wright: I remember actually when we first talked about this project. Ilana and I were working together on a collective exhibition in Paris that took up issues of body memory and habitus. Ilana was describing this research that she had been doing and it was very exciting to me because I felt that she was dealing with something very profound. Our collaboration on the project came out of the desire to react politically and effectively to the issues raised by the soil theft and by the presence of the stone cairn. This cairn has emerged, so to speak, from the earth as the soil had been removed. I remember Ilana saying, "I don't know if this is art but it seems important that we work on it." The cairn offered the possibility to conceive of an art-related project around the issue of soil theft and abstraction of territory. We began to think of the land using the metaphor of the body.

HL/SM: Can you elaborate on the concept of using the land as a metaphor for the body?

ISW: After the exhibition in Paris I began treating territory and body as the same concept. This understanding led me to articulate the project of the border cairn not like a work of art, but rather as a sign of absence. This is the subject of the work. People are always asking me, where is the work of art? The work of art is the sign of absence — this is what I am working with. The soil is what is absent, having been passed from one country to the other. This absence functions like a kind of mirror that I am erecting in front of Israeli society. I want Israelis to look at themselves through the problematic of the soil and the body. This connection between the soil and the body is gestured towards in the name of my experimental documentary — *Adamut*. Semantically, there are a few ways in Hebrew to decipher this word: *adam* = human being; *adama* = soil; *mut* = death. All of these meanings correspond to the ways in which the soil was treated, and here we return to the themes of the body and the territory.



Above left & right: *Inadvertent Monuments*. Ilana Salama Ortar and Stephen Wright, 2003, installation detail. Photo: Babak Salari.

As an unauthored artwork, the cairn is the sign of an absence not only of soil, but also of responsibility: for soil theft; for the production of absence; for the histories of partitioning.

HL/SM: I am struck by this connection that you make between body and territory. It seems to resonate with what you mentioned earlier about the work of art being the sign of absence. For me this plays out in your work in several ways. The very beginning montage of your documentary is silent. For a whole two or three minutes the viewer watches this very long exposé of the land as you film from the window of a moving vehicle. You get this sense of it almost having the quality of a painting. The first and only image of a person that we see in the entire film, is a brief reflection of the camera person in the side mirror of the car. For the rest of the film, we hear people talking, but we see no one. The viewer is left with the absent presence of the individual but the full presence of the land. On the other hand, it seems that you are speaking about the body as becoming almost metonymic with the land. Yet your body has been significantly absented from the work. What happened to that trace of yourself as the artist?

ISW: Yes, that is right. I gave the land the microphone. The land has to tell the story. I am also speaking about the land as immigrant. The land that has passed via the border is telling the story — the land is talking. That is the reason that there are no people in the film. The first three minutes of the film is a long pan of the land — like a painting. We are advancing towards a target. The point at which I showed the reflection of the camera man is only to signify that this painterly panorama has changed to a documentary film format in which the cameras are moving all of the time and filming the action. We were all very excited and I wanted to capture that movement on film.

SW: I am interested in what Ilana said. Perhaps my comment goes a bit beyond the film but takes the film as the starting point. The film was an attempt to let the land speak for itself. That is very much in keeping with the general orientation of what we are proposing here: an art without authorship, or unauthored art. Of course what we call the inadvertent monument speaks for itself, but like any other speech act it needs to be contextualized. I think the film acts as a context and so I see the film as an integral part of the type of documentation that has to exist around a structure which is unauthored.

HL/SM: Can you elaborate on the context, or what you call the documentation, that situates this unauthored work of art?

SW: The paradox of land without soil needs to be understood within the history of a particular geopolitical context. When Israel occupied south Lebanon between 1982 and 2000, under the protection of the Tsahal, men with bulldozers and other equipment went into the valley and, in an extremely macho and incredibly violent action on the symbolic level (although this violence pales in comparison to the physical and symbolic violence of the occupation), stripped the topsoil off the land and separated the soil from the territory. They took that rich topsoil from the valley near Mattula and they put it on settlements near the border in Israel. And they left. Leaving in effect, that valley stripped, barren and violated. In this way they made it much easier to return that land, the abstract territory that it had become, to the Lebanese. Remember that Israel lacked arable soil, not land.

When the workmen were taking the earth, they came across something which apparently they didn't notice: a big pile of rocks cemented together. In fact that pile of rocks had been a border cairn which was erected shortly after the First World War by British and French military surveyors. The cairn separated the mandate of Palestine to the south from Lebanon to the north. They entrenched that cairn very deep in the soil — marking a boundary, frontier, border. Of course that border was drawn very arbitrarily. It was just one of those deals brokered between British and French imperial powers. While its placement was arbitrary it also had to be given a certain anchorage — and hence, the cairn. When the soil was stolen from the land surrounding the cairn, it ceased to mark horizontal territory but came instead to mark verticality. There was a shift in the operative axis of that border cairn: it went from marking an arbitrary border to marking, in a very unmistakable but subtle way, the degree of soil theft; the hundreds and thousands of tons of soil that had been stripped off that land. The problem arises in thinking about how to address this type of symbolic violence artistically.

HL/SM: To return your own problematic, how can one think about addressing this type of symbolic violence through art?

SW: An installation that was a pile of earth on the floor of an art space would not be up to the task of dealing with that kind of problem symbolically. At best, that kind of project would evoke the absence of a presence — the fact that there was no earth on

that land. But the real issue is not so much the absence of a presence, but rather the presence of an absence. I think this presence of an absence is at the core of the problem that we want to address in our work here. It is also at the core of the whole problematic of dispossession. These issues have plagued the conflict in Palestine-Israel since 1948. What I am suggesting is that no intentional symbolic configuration would be quite appropriate.

The subtitle of our piece, “the geopolitics of perception,” gestures towards this intervention. Art really can help in a concrete political sense, in a geopolitical perceptual sense, if we could only come to look at the real and the sort of monuments, the art-like symbolic configurations that exist in the world, with anything like the attention that often times we direct towards that specific category of objects which we call artworks.

HL/SM: Stephen, you have written elsewhere on the situation of the artist in Beirut (Parachute 108, 2002), where you mention the concept of political engagement in art practice as a form of “elusive implication.” We are curious about the strategies of “elusive implication.” How can they interrupt what you have named the “partitioned times in which we live”?

SW: In that article I was looking closely at the type of art that had emerged in Beirut since the end of the civil war, particularly in the last five years. But elsewhere, around the world, I see that there is less of a political *engagement* and more of what I call a “regime of elusive implication.” Elusive implication is based on an equally high level of political lucidity, but the strategy is very different. Rather than directly politicizing art, directly putting politics into art and into autonomous art objects, there seems to be a tendency of artists to recycle their artistic skills and do what I call competency or skill crossing with people from other walks of life. The difficulty is, like this inadvertent monument, that artists' performative work in social movements, for example, often goes unseen because in a certain respect, it remains unseeable, or in any case unclaimed as art. But this type of performative work can be extremely effective.

What do I mean by artistic competencies? There is certainly a large stream of them and while artists may not be reflexively aware of them in a sort of intuitive sense, I think that the one thing that

artists share, whether they be conceptual artists or painters, is a very strong sense of individual autonomy. The artist is someone who puts one final stroke on the canvas — one stroke less it wouldn't be art and one stroke more it wouldn't be either — and declares work finished. That is something which is not at all shared by political activists. It has been detrimental to social movements and to activism that this type of individual autonomy has always been perceived as a bit of a pest, a bit of a tripping stone. Social movements have precisely the inverse skill or competency: a very strong sense of collective autonomy, which is what makes political action possible. I think that when you cross those types of competencies, a strong sense of individual autonomy with a strong sense of collective autonomy, it can be extremely effective. You have probably seen the types of effective, reinforced symbolic activity that can emerge from that. I call this art-related because it is not signed and not claimed as art by the artist.

HL/SM: Is this related to the concept that is gestured towards in the title you chose for the panel discussion, “Land without Soil, Art without Artwork”?

SW: I hesitated in the title in thinking should I call it land without soil, art unauthored because the documentation that we provide in the window at A Space is not and does not claim to be, or have the status of, an artwork. We have something that works as an artwork, or works as art, but it is unauthored. That is what I mean by inadvertent. The work at A Space is definitely authored and we assume responsibility for what we are doing, a very important point. It also has to do with taking political responsibility for what you do as an artist. . . It is important for us to take responsibility for the documentation but I don't think that you need to be an artist in order to do that. It would be my hope that art doesn't belong exclusively to artists, that it is something that can be potential. This notion of intentionality, of signing something—that is how the art world manifests itself—through signature. This intentionality is one of the worst, or at least the heaviest, impediments in moving forward in conceptual art today.

ISW: For me, it is the process of the work that has to be completed by the artist — this is what I feel, and this is what I am doing. The subjectivity of the artist has to be the basis of such work. To work in an archive, to talk with people, requires a person. There are two

It would be my hope that art doesn't belong exclusively to artists, that it is something that can be potential. This notion of intentionality, of signing something—that is how the art world manifests itself—through signature.

ways to look at this stone cairn: it is an inadvertent monument, but the basic procedure of working is very important.

In a geopolitical work of art, you need layers but also many points of view. Only while accumulating all those points of view can you achieve the whole story. One point of view, as Stephen said, is the media. The first step for me was meeting the guy who had removed the soil. The second step was making the film; parallel to this was the research in the newspaper; and parallel to this was the photography. Only by accumulating all of those points of view, including the exhibition at A Space which is the conceptual part of this research; only by accumulating everything could one achieve the whole story, the whole site.

I have to add something very important. You mentioned that the first three minutes of the film are like a painting of the landscape. This was a very difficult shot for me because, for most of my life, going to northern Israel had been very exciting. We have this site-seeing spot in the north called Kanu, which is sort of like your Niagara Falls. It is like a landscape that symbolized all of my youth. Suddenly the moment that I discovered this soil theft, the landscape betrayed me. It was like I had been looking for something that wasn't real. This is not my soil, so where am I as an Israeli citizen? Like my Palestinian friends who are here, I also have a very difficult problem in thinking, where am I? All my youth is here in this land. I am going to this land, the same land that is represented by the long three-minute shot like a landscape painting, and suddenly I discover that it is a lie. This soil is not my soil, so where am I? I don't know. It is a huge question. The land is betraying my history and my memory and at the end of everything, my identity itself is betrayed. Who am I? I don't know. This is a question that I would like everyone to ask of themselves.

SW: I think that the notion of betrayal or the notion of treason, which is very close to it, is something that is very central to the project itself and to what we are trying to get at. I have talked elsewhere about the artist working as a kind of spy. This analogy refers to a type of betraying art and betraying politics in certain way, because we are covertly operating between two ontological landscapes. In an ordinary language sort of way we suppose that our ontological landscape actually fits the world properly. I think that art opens things up since it betrays the notion that there is a per-

fect fit between these two ontological landscapes, but it can never do it overtly. When someone asks artists the question, "what is art going to do about this political problem?" they can never answer that question directly. They can only answer it with an image. This is often unsatisfying to political activists because they believe that art has the truth and they don't know why the artists won't tell them!

ISW: I am working as a spy and this is the real connection to civic art. What is the purpose of civic art in such urgent situations? As an artist you are open to seeing everything, like a voyeur — you end up betraying your society around you by making these bypasses. But only by operating from these bypasses can one work towards changing the concepts of society. Physically, I went there to the border. I was afraid to be shot at. It was forbidden to me to enter. Mentally I was afraid. I was paranoid because I was afraid that they would call me... The man that was with me is militant and we came together because of a shared idea and a mutual friendship, but he is also a guy that the Israeli government could be following. Everything is very tense. It is a sort of like guerrilla work for the artist whose intention is to put this mirror up to society.

I think of my way of working as an artist who is intervening in public space and dealing with a problematic of transit, immigration and refuge. This work is an immanent part of the concept of civic art. Civic art is intervention in public space, but, it demands working with people, with another domain, psychologically or economically,

HL/SM: One of the ideas that you have both been speaking about is the actual project of changing the whole concept of art. The image of different territories and the crossing over of those territories speaks in a very real way to the notion of, what you call extradisciplinary in relation to art practice. Can you elaborate upon this concept?

SW: The concepts that we are more familiar with are the fashionable notions of transdisciplinarity and interdisciplinarity, which presuppose that there are disciplines which can be linked. The notion of extradisciplinary is that art has actually ceased to really comprise anything like a discipline. I don't mean that it has renounced all discipline, although sometimes that would appear to

be the case. When one is working on issues around borders and frontiers, and when one is working in an era characterized principally by partition as the kind of truth of globalization in every way shape and form, it is very important to refuse and to transgress not only the real borders that keep millions of people where great power strategy wants them, but to refuse the arbitrary borders of disciplines within art itself. It is very important if art is to have a real and powerful use value and somehow live up to the standards which art throughout the twentieth century has set for itself, yet hasn't always been able to match with its actual production. It is important to really question the way art inadvertently borders itself and partitions itself off from the real. Often times there is this tendency to merely transform the symbolic configurations that exist in the real rather than leaving them where they are and trying to provide the tools, let's say, to allow them to become legible. Simply to transform them into an image and thereby sort of re-integrate them into the symbolic economy of art—that is what I call picture politics—and I think it is a great temptation even amongst the most sincere and politically committed art production.

Let's say that art production that produces art works for visual consumption probably has very limited use value, in terms of political use value. A lot of the qualities of art, and I am talking here about a particular type of gaze and attentive scrutiny of objects, can be politically useful. If you have just enough information you can look, as Ilana said, at this object as a mirror. If we manage to look at the real in that kind of a way I think that art can be extremely useful. I think that, not blindness but myopia with regard to what is really happening before our eyes is often one of the most damaging or hindering factors to effective political action or intuitive understanding, which is obviously the pre-political phase to any type of action.

Hanadi Loubani is a founding member of Women For Palestine and a member of the Negotiations working group. She is currently pursuing PhD studies at York University.

Sara Matthews is a writer, educator and independent curator. She is currently completing her doctoral dissertation in the Faculty of Education at York University and was a member of the Negotiations working group.



*Inadvertent Monuments
Ilana Salama Ortar and Stephen
Wright. 2003, installation detail.
Photo: Babak Salari.*

Beautiful Dreamers

“Unsettled Returns: A Screening and Dialogue with Michel Khleifi and Eyal Sivan”

Negotiations: From a Piece of Land to a Land of Peace

review by Richard Fung

“People are saying, ‘be realistic, be realistic. We need two states, we need to separate: this is realistic.’ But realism has failed, so we should see what utopia can offer.” Thus reasoned Eyal Sivan during the lively question-and-answer period at “Unsettled Returns,” a cinematic and in-person dialogue between the Israeli filmmaker, best known for *The Specialist*, his acclaimed 1999 documentary on the 1961 trial of Nazi Adolf Eichmann, and Michel Khleifi, whose *Wedding in Galilee*, the first fiction feature film directed by a Palestinian, won the 1987 International Critics’ Award at Cannes.



Michel Khleifi and Eyal Sivan in Toronto, 2003. Photo: Babak Salari.

Sivan’s prescription typifies the provocative thinking that made *Negotiation’s* Saturday evening program one of the freshest and most defiantly hopeful events mounted in Toronto on the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. The event included the screening of an extended excerpt of a four hour and thirty minute, collaborative work-in-progress by Khleifi and Sivan, titled *Route 181, fragments of a journey in Palestine–Israel* as well as an earlier short film by each of the directors.

Khleifi’s *Ma’aloul Celebrates Its Destruction* (1984) captures to great effect the fate of the Palestinian village of Ma’aloul, which was razed by the Israeli armed forces, its Christian and Muslim dwellers dispersed. Since then, the former inhabitants and their families have been allowed to return on only one day a year, the anniversary of Israel’s independence, when they hold a picnic among the ruins of their homes. Village elders recall the destruction of both their property and harmonious way of life, as youngsters scramble to savour and absorb their forbidden heritage in a single, precious day. Intercut with these scenes, a teacher in a Palestinian classroom explains to his teenage students the history of Palestine, the Holocaust and the creation of Israel. As the title suggests, the film’s tone is both wistful and bitingly ironic — and surprisingly generous.

By contrast, Eyal Sivan’s *Aqabat Jaber: Peace with No Return?* (1995), is sober and sobering. Sivan’s first film documented the Palestinian refugee camp of Aqabat Jaber just before the first Intifada, and now he returns a day after the Israeli military has left the region under Palestinian control. Its nominal status has changed but its inhabitants remain refugees



Above: View of the segregation wall at Kalkyilia
Below: Israeli soldiers in Ramallah
Route 181, fragments of a journey in Palestine–Israel, Michel Khleifi and Eyal Sivan, 2003, film stills.
Courtesy: the directors.

stranded in a camp. In one particularly wrenching interview, a young woman ponders her life and future, having known nothing but the dusty, desolate camp, devoid of facilities and entertainments, with all food and clothing rationed from the United Nations. Meanwhile, she yearns for the ancestral family home she has been barred from seeing. The film questions the prospects for peace without Israel’s recognition of Palestinian refugees’ right of return to their homeland, now within the state of Israel.

Route 181, the cornerstone of the evening’s program, is a “road movie” that follows the directors along the imaginary borders proposed by United Nations General Assembly Resolution 181 for the partition of the British-ruled Palestine Mandate into a Jewish and an Arab state. Accepted by the Jews in Palestine, but neither by the Palestinian Arabs nor the Arab states, the Resolution passed by a majority of voting members, though it has been noted that in 1947, the year of its passage, much of Asia and almost all of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific were without voice at the UN, being colonies of Europe.

Travelling from south to north, the directors not only document the military apparatus and physical barriers deployed to separate Palestinians and Israelis, most notoriously the wall under construction by the government of Ariel Sharon, they demonstrate the contentious yet inextricable link between the two peoples. Unfortunately, the range of possible interactions seems limited, often taking the form of Israeli soldiers monitoring Palestinians at the frequent checkpoints, or Palestinian workers in the employ of Israelis, as in a candid interview with an Israeli archaeologist and his Palestinian work crew.

In the discussion period, Sivan used an anecdote to further illustrate how Israel functions as an “ethnocracy”: approaching a checkpoint, the film’s production manager, his sister, would stop only after being ordered to, and she would pull up right beside the soldier. Khleifi, on the other hand, would halt the vehicle 100 metres before the checkpoint and wait for the soldier to summon him. “This,” Sivan explained, “is how [the soldier] knows who is Israeli and who is Palestinian.” “But at the end of the shooting,”



Ma'aloul Celebrates Its Destruction. Michel Khleifi. Film still. Courtesy: Sindibad Films.

he continued, "Michel was acting like my sister. He drove through the checkpoint, shouting at the soldier, 'you will say please.' At that moment he stopped being Palestinian."

Khleifi added, "This is not a problem of the soldier, but of the system... At its heart the Israeli system is a racist system, because it is an ethnic system." He cautioned, however, against entrenched divisiveness and "dangerous ethnic, religious and racist developments [that are] not good for Palestinian or Arab society, nor for Israeli or Jewish society." "The trauma of one is not against the trauma of the other," he continued. "Two traumas can live together, but we must be able to express ourselves and be open."

It is this commitment to justice and reconciliation that unites Khleifi and Sivan. They believe that progressive Israelis and Palestinians must work together, not in separate camps, to oppose the Occupation, to build a new project and to create a future in a bi-cultural, bi-national, secular state. This drives their art-making and, as Sivan explained it, the aim of

Route 181 "was not to give two visions, an Israeli vision and a Palestinian vision, but to try and give a common view of the space." Yet, even this seemingly innocuous platform would be controversial among the ethnic and religious nationalists on both sides, not least among those committed to Israel as a Jewish state.

As this review is being written, the tentative truce between the Israeli government and Palestinian militants forged in the summer of 2003 is giving way to the familiar cycle of assassinations, suicide bombings, arrests and that peculiarly medieval Israeli practice of house demolitions — against which the rational, secular West remains mute. But if and when there is a just peace between Palestinians and Israelis, it will owe a debt to utopian dreamers like Khleifi and Sivan.

Richard Fung is a videomaker and writer, and teaches at the Ontario College of Art and Design.

Notes

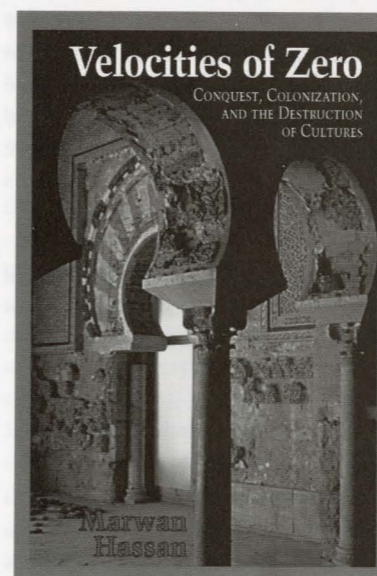
- 1 The film was screened under the tentative title *The Partition Line*. The film has since been retitled *Route 181*.

One, two, three...colonialism

Hassan, Marwan. *Velocities of Zero: Conquest, Colonization, and the Destruction of Cultures*. (Toronto: TSAR, 2002).

review by Gamal Abdel-Shehid

...the process of canonization, and of the comparative study of languages, i.e., philology.) Hassan skillfully shows how demography has always been a politically implicated "science" in the service of capital, and has been crucial to the institution and maintenance of colonialist projects, whether imposed upon indigenous peoples in the Western Hemisphere, or in continental Africa, via the World Bank and the World Trade Organization. His engaging and poetic title — a rewriting of Marx's phrase "velocity of capital" — encapsulates the thesis of his argument.¹ This argument, evidencing Hassan's dialectical predilections, suggests that far from what we might expect, demography is not the story of counting and amassing numbers. On the contrary, demography has an intimate relation with nothingness, given that colonialism and racism always posit the natives (or the conquered) as disappearing, dead or dying. Witness Palestine and the indigenous land we occupy in what we call "the West." As such, the desire to be rid of, or to contain or manage the natives within the category of the zero or "the declining" is demography's *raison d'être*. He writes:



Those who count for a living, such as census takers, statisticians and demographers, would be well advised to read Marwan Hassan's latest book, *Velocities of Zero: Conquest, Colonization, and the Destruction of Cultures*. Not that doing so would be a feel-good experience, given that Hassan calls into question the relation between their work and the global capitalist and colonialist enterprise, which he traces back over 500 years. Hassan argues that demography, philology and art criticism (aesthetics) are not merely innocent disciplines but rather emerged out of three related processes: the fall of Al-Andalus (Muslim Spain), the decimation of indigenous peoples in the Western Hemisphere and the beginnings of the African slave trade. Not only did these processes enable the hegemony of European capitalism, via a massive accumulation of capital, they allowed for the emergence and colonialist foundations of these disciplines.

In tracing the present from the past, Hassan demonstrates the urgent need for a political

economy of demography (in later chapters, he asserts the need for a political economy of art, especially of the process of canonization, and of the comparative study of languages, i.e., philology.) Hassan skillfully shows how demography has always been a politically implicated "science" in the service of capital, and has been crucial to the institution and maintenance of colonialist projects, whether imposed upon indigenous peoples in the Western Hemisphere, or in continental Africa, via the World Bank and the World Trade Organization. His engaging and poetic title — a rewriting of Marx's phrase "velocity of capital" — encapsulates the thesis of his argument.¹ This argument, evidencing Hassan's dialectical predilections, suggests that far from what we might expect, demography is not the story of counting and amassing numbers. On the contrary, demography has an intimate relation with nothingness, given that colonialism and racism always posit the natives (or the conquered) as disappearing, dead or dying. Witness Palestine and the indigenous land we occupy in what we call "the West." As such, the desire to be rid of, or to contain or manage the natives within the category of the zero or "the declining" is demography's *raison d'être*. He writes:

If counting a population commenced with census-taking as a record of the gains of society, today recording a population is something other, it is a calculus of loss. Demography becomes tragedy... In the name of civilization, freedom and capital. Demography, however much it piles up prodigious numbers, could be described as having an intimate relationship with zero.

The latter two chapters of the book extend this thesis as Hassan elaborates upon his earlier arguments to discuss cultural products, such as language and art. Hassan argues that like demography philology is born of the colonialist enterprise; as such, it is consumed with the question of the zero, or the worth of language. In other words, it preoccupies itself with questions such as: which languages are disappearing, which are robust, which are great. Hassan suggests that philology, a demography of language, would have remained a tangential intellectual enterprise were it not for the rise of capitalism and colonialism.

In making this argument, he suggests that philology began with the colonial creation of the dragoman,² whom Hassan defines as a “trickster [who] lurked everywhere and nowhere in the social web of exchanges.” In the early colonial period the dragoman became (and even now continues to be) an all-important vehicle for legitimizing the authority of colonial languages, such as English and French. Moreover, the dragoman who, over time, becomes the philologist has had to “scientifically” account for the marginality of certain indigenous languages, which are said to be dying or in decline, such as Cherokee, Quechua and Kiswahili, for example. In this regard, the philologist establishes a lineage that, like all racialized knowledge, is hierarchical. This hierarchy is necessary given capitalist colonialism’s inability to equally conceive of social difference or diversity. Regarding this point, Hassan notes that “it is not the diversity of languages which divides humanity.” Rather, “[c]apitalism is a monolithic form of economics which competitively seeks to eliminate or repress alternatives.”

These insights are a useful corrective to contemporary governmental discussions of multiculturalism and “diversity” that, while illuminating and celebrating cultural diversity as existing among different ethnic groups (for example, Somalis, Portuguese and Koreans) within the nation, ignore one crucial detail. This is that capitalism is a cultural form in itself that organizes labour, consumption, distribution and indeed culture itself. As such, capitalism allows for, even employs, certain displays of diversity

or ethnic difference, to the extent that these do not impede the accumulation of capital. Thus, Hassan’s discussion of capitalism’s “impulse for monoculturalism and monolingualism” is crucial in the contemporary moment, when “diversity” is all the rage.

Continuing this line of argument, and arguing against the monoculturalism of capital, Hassan’s final chapter discusses art and consumption. In this chapter, he argues against metaphysical descriptions of art positing abstract and universal notions of beauty. Once again, he suggests that these descriptions are haunted by the question of the zero, meaning which is declining and ascending. He notes that,

The desire to expel materiality from cultural analysis is the basis for the construction of hierarchies. Comparisons of greatness, establishments of canons, and more generally the ranking of cultures, societies and civilizations neglect that a culture’s production has to be considered relative to its own capacity for production and to its own interpretive modes and use values.

In other words, when cultures are ranked “equally” or in a false hierarchy, the zero, which names such things as “primitive art” becomes the ideological tool to accomplish this work.

Ultimately, the strength of Hassan’s work is his breadth, which is quite frankly stunning. In that regard he is a devoted student of Samir Amin, the prolific and poignant Egyptian political economist, who brings a phenomenal linguistic and historical capacity to his voluminous body of work. Unfortunately much of Amin’s work is out of print, and *Velocities of Zero* successfully develops some of Amin’s more crucial insights, for example his theory of eurocentrism. Following in Amin’s footsteps, Hassan shows the importance of being a global thinker. This skill is especially important at a time when such truly global work is more and more relevant, and less and less favourably regarded, given both the post-9/11 rush to parochialism and the revival of what Tariq Ali calls the “clash of fundamentalisms.”

Hassan’s global scope means that his work should also be of interest to many people other than demographers and statisticians. Specifically, academics and activists reading and working in the area of globalization need to read this book. Particularly because much of the literature on economic globalization reads globalization as a new phenomenon, beginning somewhere around the late 1960s and early 1970s. While this is to some extent true, given that capitalist modes of production did change significantly around that period, Hassan’s work is crucial in demonstrating that capitalism, given that it works through and is only possible via colonialism, has always been about globalizing production, the labour force and so on. Hassan’s twinning of capitalism and colonialism (persuasively argued with deep historical knowledge) is crucial, especially given that it has been overlooked by the gurus of anti-globalization, who have made otherwise cogent, albeit fairly ahistorical, arguments — witness the work of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri and Naomi Klein. Moreover, Hassan’s work demonstrates that questions of globalization are not merely economic, as too many on the Left presume, but also deeply cultural. Hassan’s ability to speak to questions of culture and economics means that he should be read both by those engaged in diaspora or transnationalism and transculturation studies, as well as those doing work on political economy. *Velocities of Zero* is worth reading not simply to be informed, but to seriously engage Hassan’s methodology.

Gamal Abdel-Shehid is assistant professor in cultural studies in the faculty of physical education and recreation at the University of Alberta

Notes

- 1 The “zero” in the title perhaps resonates more loudly if we think about its meaning in Arabic. *Sifr*, the Arabic word for zero, can mean the number zero, but it also has incredible cultural power to negatively define things. As such, it can mean for example, “nothing,” “worthless,” or “shit.”
- 2 Also known as tarjuman or turjuman, which as Hassan notes, comes from the Arabic word *tarjama*, meaning to translate or interpret.

WILL

A Space. June 19–29, 2003
Negotiations: From a Piece of Land to a Land of Peace

review by Naomi Binder Wall

The call for submissions to “Will” placed primary emphasis on interrogative collaborative projects. The result is artwork that exceeds traditional modes of representation and emerges through inclusive collaborative practice. Viewers are offered the possibility of participation in an evolving process of engagement and discovery, moving us beyond looking, entreating us to contribute our labour to our viewing. The exhibit’s seven visual artworks include text and image, a website, audio-visual and electronic installations and photography. All of the pieces are interactive. The different projects come alive inasmuch as viewers engage with them and assist in their realization.

Olive Fair is the exhibit’s most uniquely collaborative installation, engaging viewers directly in the completion of the installation and pushing our understandings of collaboration toward a more accountable solidarity. *Destinations* represents an extensive collaboration across disciplines and borders, and with communities. *Squares in the Pavement* mirrors an insurgent resistance through photographs of communities in collaboration. *The Video Petition Project* is a broad-based collaboration, documenting dissenting voices which together make a fact of the growing international condemnation of the Israeli occupation of Palestine, and *Farah — In Search for Joy* is a unique collaboration of the artist with Palestinians to document their “untouchable dreams.”

Olive Fair – Negotiations Working Group

“It must be clear that there is no room for both peoples in this country...there is no way besides transferring the Arabs from here to the neighboring countries, to transfer them all; except maybe for Bethlehem, Nazareth and Old Jerusalem, we must not leave a single village, not a single tribe.”

—Joseph Weitz, director of the Jewish National Land Fund, December 19, 1940
Displayed text, *Olive Fair*



Olive Fair, Negotiations Working Group. Installation detail. All images this article photographed by Babak Salari, 2003. Courtesy: Negotiations Working Group.

The *Olive Fair* installation is a pile of concrete and wire rubble, seemingly dumped on the gallery floor, amid which lie small glass bottles of olive oil and other olive products. A monitor stands unsteadily upon a stone amidst the rubble, transmitting a video documentation of a direct action by the International Solidarity Committee (ISM) in support of a group of Palestinian olive-tree growers in the West Bank who were resisting uprooting of their trees by Israeli soldiers and bulldozers. We are invited to witness the evidence of violation in the rubble, and to take product samples in exchange for contributing personal responses to a website. The olive products are produced in Galilee (Northern Israel) and in the West Bank by Palestinian farmers and marketed by Sindyanna, the only not-for-profit association in Israel working in accordance with the principles of Fair Trade. We, too, engage in a fair exchange, by documenting our commitment to take initiatives to support Palestinian farmers, in exchange for our taking of the olive products. The aim is to add to growing public awareness of the destruction of the agricultural/economic infrastructure in the West Bank; to concretize particular strategic practices of Palestinian survival and resistance; and to challenge



Destinations: A Palestinian-Israeli Audio-Visual Installation. Galia Shapira, Aref Nammari, Haggai Kupermintz, Phil Shane. Installation detail.

viewers/witnesses to ground the current Palestine-Israel conflict in its colonial context.

Olive Fair is multi-faceted. In addition to the rubble, olive products and video display, print materials provide statistics documenting historically diminishing Palestinian land. Visitors are asked to write their responses and ideas for their own solidarity initiatives in a cloth binder. From the rubble itself to the raw burlap pages of the binder, and to the confrontation between the growers and the ISM against the soldiers and bulldozers, the effect is one of roughness and hard surfaces. Laid amongst these signs of a rough reality, the olive products, embodying strategic resistance, promise the potential of healing.

***Destinations: A Palestinian-Israeli Audio-Visual Installation* – Galia Shapira, Aref Nammari, Haggai Kupermintz, Phil Shane**

Destinations locates us in Palestine-Israel through the use of multiple slides of photographic images of landscapes, projected onto the gallery walls in a continuous sequence. Sound recordings of narratives and poetry, in Arabic and Hebrew, tell personal stories as accompaniments to the visual images. The landscapes, gathered from Palestinians and Israelis, forefront the possibility of a common destiny. The land itself is the frame within which the narratives express the hope for, and the commitment to, reconciliation. *Destinations* asks that we realize the inherent equality and validity of both sides. A critical limitation of the installation is its implied message of symmetry and balance in the experiences of Palestinians and Israelis. *Destinations* does not account for the asymmetry and imbalance of power in the region that results in the disproportionate distribution of the impact of violence there. The trenchancy of *Destinations* lies in its capacity to kindle our imaginative ability to envision the land of Palestine-Israel. As the large photographs continuously change, creating a kind of movement through the region, we are located in that disputed geopolitical space and engaged with the humanity of both peoples.



Squares in the Pavement / Beau temps, mauvais temps. Shahrzad Arshadi and Josée Lambert. Installation detail.

***Squares in the Pavement/Beau temps, mauvais temps* – Shahrzad Arshadi, Josée Lambert**

Squares in the Pavement is a photo-documentary project by two artists, one from the east, the other from the west, who met in front of the Israeli Consulate in Montreal while standing vigil for peace and justice in Palestine. Over the course of a year, during which regular vigils were held, they photographed participants to document a particular effort in support of the Palestinian struggle and the broader movement to end the occupation. The result is an installation of 104 black and white photographs that signify the continuity of this solidarity initiative. The portraits of participants, from all races and origins and including Jews and Palestinians, reveal that they wear the immediately recognizable symbol of Palestine, the kefia. Widely perceived as a symbol of "terrorism," the kefia is repositioned within the exhibit as a symbol of solidarity and an insurgent resistance. The

richly textured photos direct our gaze beyond the confines of the captured moment to the potential for peace and justice in the region.

***Video Petition Project* – Artist Emergency Response**

AER is a Chicago-based collective of artists and activists — including many Jews and Palestinians — working for a just and peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The *Video Petition Project* is a visual testimony of individual North Americans voicing their opposition to the Israeli Occupation. Here, collaboration encompasses a vast community of people holding a spectrum of views, whose voices join with a growing chorus of dissenting voices, encouraging new declarations against the occupation. It is a politically strategic artwork. The eighty-minute video was on display during April and May, 2003 at the Chicago Museum of Contemporary Art.

***Farah— In Search for Joy* – Rami a.k.a Jaromil**

A broadly-based collaborative project, *Farah— In Search for Joy*, challenges prevailing stereotypes of "Arabs" and "Palestinians" and radicalizes common practices of solidarity by foregrounding the Palestinian reality. It is a documentation of Jaromil's travel through the occupied territories of Palestine, in search for joy. His aim is to textualize the lives and culture of Palestinians surviving within the chaotic and brutal theatre of war, without mentioning the war itself. What remains untouched by war? As Jaromil says, "everything in the tales of children and older folks that pervades in the identity of a people in spite of dispossession, humiliation and violence." *Farah— In Search for Joy* tells us stories lost in the miasma of the tall-tales we are inundated with about Palestine. It bespeaks the resistance embedded in the imagination, in untouchable dreams.

The installation itself is simply a monitor and a website. We are invited to access the site, which includes text as narratives and historical data, sound, photographs and a diary including poetry. Jaromil uses the net, which he identi-



Video Petition Project. Artist Emergency Response. Installation detail.

Art of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, 1966-1976

Plug In Institute of Contemporary Art
to August 23, 2003

review by Amy Karlinsky

There are no radical avant-garde strategies here. The large studio paintings, modelled after a mid-century Russian formula of socialist realism and the earlier nineteenth-century influence of French realist Gustave Courbet, sprinkled with the flash dash of impressionism, are not as aesthetically interesting as the prints, whose dramatic compositions and stunning immediacy were made in multiples for wide-spread distribution. Some are reminiscent of lurid garish film posters of early Hollywood. Others exploit the expressive lines of European wood block printing of the 1920s and 1930s. But it's not so much the aesthetics that dazzle, rather the cumulative effects of art in the service of the revolution. It's a stunning display of absolute power.

Art is always fraught with politics, but never more overtly than as part of a deliberate campaign to instruct or re-educate. These artworks were produced during the years of initial mob brutality, when criticism of Mao's enemies and of western bourgeois intellectualism flourished, when millions were sent to the countryside for re-education. Such power as we see on the walls — Mao enchants the world, Mao takes the place of the sun in the sky — is mobilized through simplified, idealized bodies and heroic gestures. These are the realistic and iconic templates for emulation. Their messages are easily interpreted and their lack of ambiguity made them accessible to all.

The men and women of the Red Army construct scaffolding, salute in unison and enact their activities with precision. I detected ten years of ballet training in one pointed toe. All the soldiers are cheerful. All have the class struggle in mind. The modern industrial state is

"Art of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, 1966-1976" is devoted to some of the best visual propaganda that the twentieth century has produced. Assembled by the Belkin Art Gallery at the University of British Columbia and beautifully installed at Plug In ICA, it's a travelling exhibition devoted to the visual material — art and ephemera — of Mao Zedong's cultural revolution. It is filled with silkscreens, woodblock prints, newspaper illustrations, sketchbooks, projections and recordings of official opera-ballets, large scale paintings, a sculptural installation, a tapestry and a few artifacts. It's a "must-see" for artists, historians, students, choreographers, ministers of culture, would-be despots and any naive soul who imagines power to be an abstract concept. The show, curated by Scott Watson and Shengtian Zheng, is based on loans from collectors in Hong Kong and mainland China. Work like this has never been exhibited before in Winnipeg, although there are knowledgeable local collectors with significant collections of artifacts, sculpture and print material.

Such an exhibition raises challenging questions about the role of art in contemporary society and the relationships between art and the state. It's also a curious look at the blurred boundaries between art and mass culture, and how these two terms might operate differently in the West and the East. Contemporary western artists regularly explore the object surplus of mass culture to invigorate and animate their art. It's hard to say to which category of visual material these revolutionary objects should be assigned.



The Fame of the People's Hero Endures Forever, Woodblock detail. Watson, Scott, *Art of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution 1966-76*. (Vancouver: Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, 2002)



Dance, Alexandra Handal in collaboration with poets Karen Alkalay-Gut and Nathalie Handal. Installation detail.

mation of the poem is projected onto the wall. As we view the projection, we are hard-pressed to "see" the text of the poem as it transforms into abstract shapes that constantly move against and past each other. The words emerge slowly as the lines of a poem, then become stanzas and finally the complete text. Intertwining luminous, neon-like colour and fragments of text, the installation's immediate effect as the image moves away from and eludes us, is a sense of uncertainty, disruption and groundlessness. It is only when we realize the full text of the poem, which is an invitation for a Palestinian-Israeli engagement through dance across the divide imposed by the Israeli occupation, that we find our ground and are returned to a sense of equilibrium. Movement, colour, rhythm and language combine to reveal a tangled web of emotions inherent to the process of negotiating across seemingly impassable divides.

I was particularly interested in how the seven installations realized priorities formulated by the Negotiations Working Group during their own collaborative process when planning the multi-part event. Most challenging was their intention to address Zionism as an inherently colonialist project. Taken overall, "Will" locates the occupation of Palestine in its colonialist construction, confronts the hypocrisy of so-called peace efforts in the Middle East and problematizes notions of "negotiations." "Will" fulfills the promise of its conception by extending the limits of common understandings of collaboration in artmaking, exploring the relationship between an insurgent resistance and the potential for peace, and providing opportunities for a collaborative and ongoing production of new knowledge and accountable cultural representations of solidarity.

Naomi Binder Wall is a feminist anti-racism/anti-oppression educator, community activist and writer, as well as a member of the Jewish Women's Committee to End the Occupation.

fies as a privileged medium, to provide the means for the content to emerge. The medium disappears as we are left with a sense only of the power of the content, though it is the electronic power of the medium which conveys it to us. *Farah* exploits the freedom the net gives Jaromil to disseminate his passionate entreaty, in text and image.

Inadvertent Monuments – Ilana Salama Ortar and Stephen Wright *Dance* – Alexandra Handal, Karen Alkalay-Gut and Nathalie Handal

While *Olive Fair*, *Squares in the Pavement*, and *Farah* — *In Search for Joy* foreground the Palestinian reality in broadly collaborative installations that concretize people's lived experience, *Inadvertent Monuments* and *Dance* seek a more cerebral interaction with viewers.

Inadvertent Monuments mediates the space between intentioned representation and unintentional and inadvertent — even invisible — signs. During the Israeli occupation of South Lebanon (1982–2000), and with the knowledge of Israeli forces, layers of top soil were taken from a wide-ranging turf of occupied land in the area and transported by dump trucks to Israeli settlements and orchards near the border. A cairn, enshrining the colonial partition between the French mandate of Lebanon and the British mandate of Palestine, emerged as irrefutable evidence of the theft of the soil. Once deeply entrenched in the earth, it now stands eight feet above the ground, both sign, and concrete evidence of an historical, and current, reality, revealing the entirety of the crisis. As an artwork the cairn's memory-message is made legible. Photographs of the cairn, seen from different angles and distances, combine with a variety of kinds of text, including media reports and historical documentation. (For more detailed treatment of *Inadvertent Monuments* see this issue's feature interview. — ed.)

Dance is a lyrical piece based on a joint poem written by Israeli poet Karen Alkalay-Gut and Palestinian poet Nathalie Handal. A digital ani-



Inadvertent Monuments, Ilana Salama Ortar and Stephen Wright. Installation detail.

For further engagement with the works in "Will" see:

www.artistemergencyresponse.org
<http://farah.dyne.org>
<http://olivefair.net>
<http://www.sindyanna.com>



Mao Matador. William Eakin, 2000. Courtesy: the artist.

ordered. The agricultural land is neatly divided into a grid. The zealous precision of heightened expression and gestures in both the print materials and the ballet operas is unnerving. Stay too long in this exhibition and you may find yourself wishing for such fidelity to authority from children, students or dogs. After two screenings of the official opera-ballet *On the Docks*, I was leaping across Plug In ICA's Annex space.

There are many interesting and lively dimensions to this show, including the eight official ballet-operas that were commissioned and directed by Mao's wife, Jiang Qing, one of the Gang of Four and the "de facto Minister of Culture." Four DVD projections of varying sizes are nicely integrated into the exhibition without being relegated to a corner or viewing room, as is often the case with large mixed-media exhibitions. The eight official performance works will be rotated through the exhibition over its duration in Winnipeg. Plug In ICA director Carol Phillips related that one Asian patron noticed

the projection and began singing along to what later was recounted as a familiar performance of her youth. The response from Winnipeg's Asian community has been mixed, with reports of some elderly Chinese refusing to see the exhibition, and others eager to revisit the tumultuous period of mob rule.

In 1974–75, during my last year at a free school in Winnipeg, I read about the Chinese Revolution. Art seemed to hold powerful possibilities for truth and authenticity. I wore a Mao button on my blue-jean jacket. Then, it was a sign of defiance and conveyed some vague notion of absolute alterity. It was a symbol completely and utterly exteriorized. Mao would have been appalled by such a frivolous, bourgeois and anarchic decadence. The meaning of that little button for me, tucked away in a drawer, has changed. And this exhibition is a sobering opportunity to reconsider the revolution's penetration of the individual psyche. Power, as French philosopher Michel Foucault has told us, has material implications for the lived body. Mao's "bio-power" during the Cultural Revolution turned millions of living bodies upside down, interpellating even the most wayward of subjects at profound physical and psychic levels. Consider the rigour of both the soldiers and the ballet dancers. There is no gesture that is half-hearted or ambivalent. It's amazing to consider how the cult of Mao achieved such widespread dominance. The insistence on Mao as end and beginning evidences the material substance of Louis Althusser's formulation of ideology as an imaginary relation collectively effected through the state apparatus. Insight into the saturation of the propaganda and subsequent disaffection is found in the sketchbooks of artist Gu Xiong, who now lives and teaches art in British Columbia.

While most of the works in the exhibition were undertaken by collectives and were part of the multiples that were distributed for public consumption, Gu Xiong's thirty-three sketchbooks, made between 1972 and 1975, contain tiny and intimate notations of hegemony and resistance — made when the artist had been sent to the Qingping Commune in Sichuan province for re-

education. Some of the sketches are perfect little ideological gems, showing Mao floating in centre stage to public admiration. Others show the beginning anxieties of meltdown—an artist in the frenetic mode of production — expressions downcast and desolate. It's fascinating to look into these small notebooks. Gu Xiong recounts, "In the daytime, during breaks from labor, I would draw other peasants and the landscape. At night, under the light of an oil lamp, I would draw my inner thoughts. Through these sketches, I began to develop an independent will. My concepts and expressions in art began to shift. According to revolutionary theory, the laws of artistic achievement were 'red, smooth, bright' and 'tall, robust, perfect'. The practice of this revolutionary art became hollow and meaningless. It was soon abandoned in my mind."

Plug In's inclusion of such stimulating and challenging material into its exhibition program befits its ambitious reach as an Institute of Contemporary Art. The budget or possibly the curators' summer travel schedule meant that a proposed roundtable with co-curator Scott Watson did not occur. The five-dollar catalogue with its essays and guide to the exhibition becomes the significant means of information and dialogue for the approximately 200 works. There is no signage related to individual works, though there are placards that provide generalized historic information. As patrons wander in and out admiring the works, one wishes for more context and more dialogue. The work only partially declares itself on the wall, its red and smooth legibility masking the more troubling and interesting questions about realism as a revolutionary style, the depths of hegemony and resistance and the allegorical message for contemporary art and politics.

Context means a lot for a show like this, particularly in a province where "social studies" is no longer a mandatory part of senior year's curriculum, where a sustained critical dialogue about art can be limited and where the future Pooh museum threatens to land. Without the benefit of a conference such as was held in Vancouver in conjunction with the exhibition, perhaps a lateral move could have been made,

a move that might radically shift the works in the exhibition, so as to demonstrate their historicity and their fallibility. I am thinking, for example, of contemporary visual artwork as a means of comparison, work that recontextualizes and reconsiders. Regina-based artist Jeannie Mah utilizes image transfers of Mao on her elegant ceramic cups as signs in the exploration of her family's political and social situation in Saskatchewan. Winnipeg artist William Eakin, a tenacious investigator of mass cultural forms, has used his collection of material from the Cultural Revolution in unexpected and unusual ways.

Eakin, in his own words, "brings Mao to the bull fight." In other words, he creates incongruous pairings of things. In Eakin's art, photographic images of Mao on porcelain buttons are superimposed on painted tourist souvenirs of matadors. Mao becomes the inner lens, the slightly asymmetrical oculus, the bullfighter's shield and a homeless floating head.² Mao's fury, laughter and ambiguity are thus set aloft. It's a collapsed series of historic and temporal moments, characterized by a highly attenuated and individual response to the qualities of things.

It's a move that speaks about wonder, but more importantly about deliberate and overt acts of interpretation and intervention. Given the presentation of the Mao motifs as the final demarcation of truth, it's a relief to think about Eakin's work and a brand of contemporary production in the West that still has currency. Its interpretation as a wilful, subjective and multiple enterprise and intervention based on play and formal rigour.

Amy Karlinsky is a freelance writer who works and lives in Winnipeg. She is a Sessional Lecturer at the University of Manitoba's School of Art.

1 Gu Xiong, "Artist Statement, Fading Images: My Zhiqing Life in My Sketchbooks (1972-1975)" in *Art of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution*. Vancouver: Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, 2002:47.

2 Published in William Eakin, *Ordinary Art*. Winnipeg: SNACPRESS, 2002: 2000:09:09 14:53:48 and 15:51:30, n.p.

Negotiations: A post-ironic memo with no slogans

by Gita Hashemi

The worst failure is of the predictable kind. At the time of this writing, Ariel Sharon's Israeli government has called off "road map" negotiations and sent its occupation forces back into the centres of Palestinian towns for more mass arrests and house demolitions. The Palestinian Authority — as such dependant from the start on Israeli will to consider "peace" — is scrambling to counter accusations that it supports "terrorism." At the same time its internal legitimacy hangs by a thread that started getting thinner long before the current Intifada proved the hopelessness of "peace" as brokered in Oslo, by the Americans. Meanwhile, the Israeli government continues to build roads through confiscated Palestinian lands, connecting illegal settlements — which have only proliferated since Oslo — for exclusive use by armed settlers and soldiers. Following its singular logic of "security," this "only democracy in the Middle East" continues the construction of the 1000-km-long, eight-meter-high, two-meter-thick segregation wall that is longer, taller and thicker than the one whose destruction the "free world" celebrated only fourteen years ago. Even to the most gullible of us, it should be clear by now that negotiations prescribed by roadmaps charting already-traveled territories — partitioned, occupied and pillaged for decades through colonialist agendas — come to nothing but a dead end.

In April 2002, Creative Response was formed through a public meeting of over sixty artists, writers, cultural workers, activists and academics who felt the urgency to respond, in solidarity with the Palestinian struggles and towards a just peace, to Israeli terror campaigns. The will of this loose collectivity has carried a number of arts-driven interventions in the public discourse on the Israel–Palestine conflict. Most recently, a small all-volunteer band of us, the Negotiations working group, staged Negotiations: From a Piece of Land to a Land of Peace. While Negotiations received very little support from institutional arts funders (an issue that falls outside the scope of this brief but begs discussion elsewhere), the support — monetary and in-kind — of diverse individuals as well as artist-run, academic and grassroots organizations enabled us to mount a programme that expanded by its internal necessity to the point of being dubbed "sprawling" by a friendly critic. To the organizing group, this could have been the measure of success, but we gauged our success somewhat differently.

We started this project a year ago from the conclusion that neither the sloganeering of trendy anti- "fill-in the blank" movements, nor the ambivalence of intellectual ironicism (irony + cynicism) nor their attendant conceptual paradigms and creative practices were adequate responses to the urgency of the conditions in North America and in Palestine–Israel. The rise of renewed fascism to state power in the United States — the world's military capital — coupled with the resurgence of militarist colonialism the world over — both readily justified through discourses of "democracy," "free trade," "security" and "anti-terrorism" — necessitate that we substantiate our critical deconstructive strategies with constructive social exchange toward building and strengthening *heterogeneous* (not "pluralist") and *accountable* networks of resistance and solidarity. Such networks are crucial to the formation and fortification of a collective will to dissent from the given and move towards the envisioned. They allow us to move from preaching "peace" prosaically to working through our geopolitical, social, economic and historical differences and power asymmetries, and to building toward the necessary conditions for a

just peace. To this effect, we made the notions of collaborating across "divides" (national, cultural, political, disciplinary) and public participation central to our curatorial concepts and integral in our programming approaches. We reasoned that only in the space of shared labour could meaningful negotiations take place, and that art, as a medium of communication and imagination, could not only mediate such social dialogue but also facilitate broader participation in it.

Negotiations brought to Toronto a wide range of collaborative projects and programmes by cultural producers of different backgrounds and belongings. Most of these drew on public participation in their creative processes and/or creatively capitalized on the collaborative nature of the space of dissemination to actively engage the audiences in the issues they raised. In our own work, we conversed and collaborated with diverse individuals and groups in anti-racist, feminist, indigenous rights, union and social justice movements; and consciously built in our programme multiple platforms — post-screening discussions, panels, workshops and a public forum — for presenter–audience as well as presenter–presenter dialogue. The totality of this space of shared labour was where differing political claims and social visions were problematized and negotiated, openly, collectively and transparently. Inevitably, these negotiations led to new understandings, relations and networks, thus manifesting the "use value" of artistic engagement as visionary social construction. This, to us, was the topmost measure of Negotiations' viability.

If it is true that when there is a will there is a way, then it must follow that when the will is collective the way cannot but be shared. Simplistic statement, I agree. But, the sincerity and intensity with which all participants — presenters, audiences and volunteers — engaged in Negotiations has convinced me that beyond the segregation wall there is a way to that most lauded and least realized ideal: common good. After all, there is no other way.

Gita Hashemi is a Toronto-based artist, writer and educator and a founding member of Creative Response. She was the artistic director of Negotiations.

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Po Chun Lau, Krystyna Cseh-Woodland, Janice Colbert, and Benjamin Oakley present abstract landscape and nature inspired paintings/mixed media works.

January 8 - 31, 2004

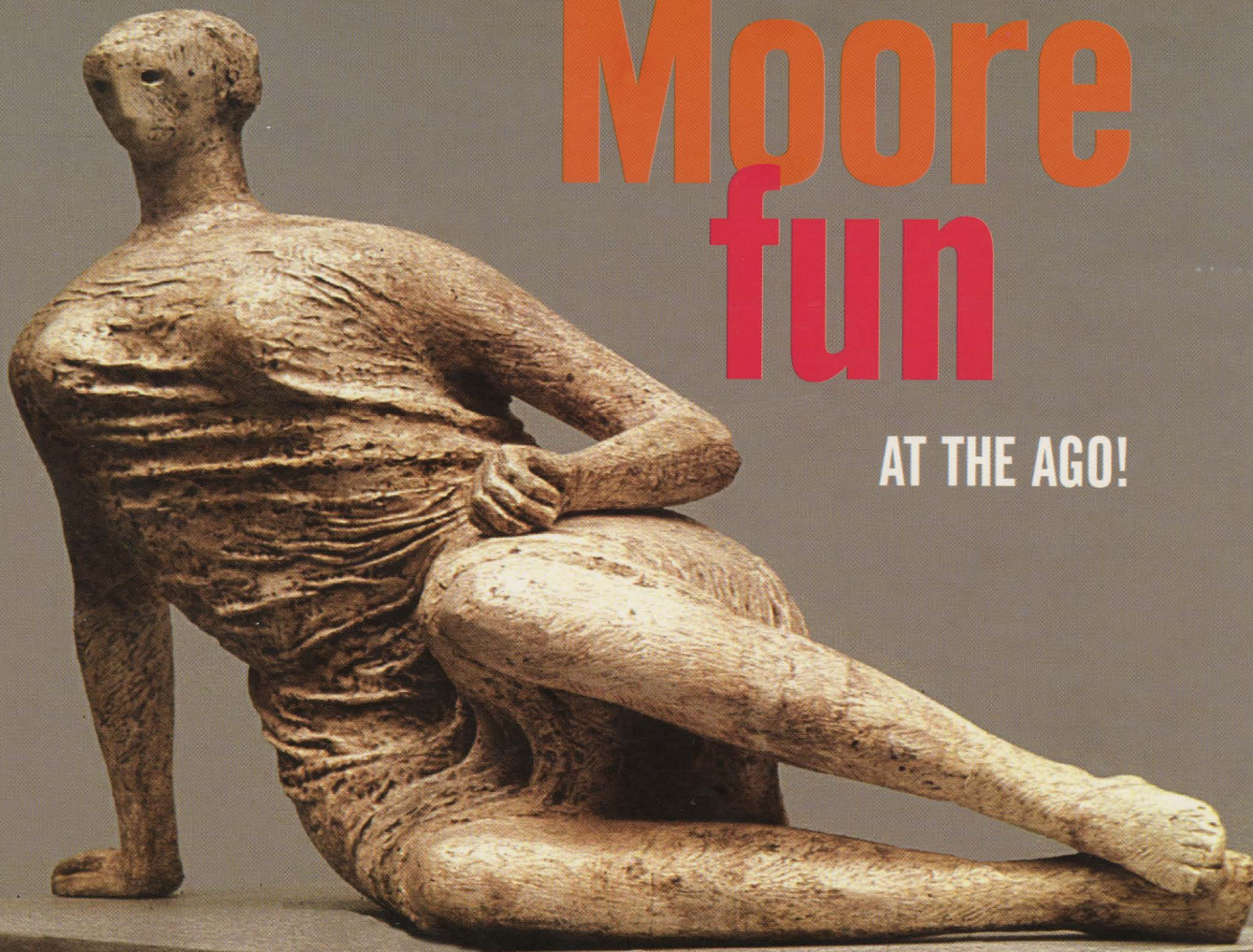
Vernissage: Thursday, January 8, 5 – 7 pm

An exhibition of bronze, and mixed media works presented in conjunction with the Foundry department of OCAD. Featuring works by Tom Deitrich, Marta Franco, Edourdo Lee, Melody Mason, Adriana Palazzolo, Maria Pankow, and others.

Ontario College of Art & Design OCAD Gallery 285 Dundas St. W. 1st Fl. Toronto
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Henry Moore (British, 1898-1986) *Draped Reclining Woman*, 1957-58. Original plaster. Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, gift of Henry Moore, 1974. © 2003 The Henry Moore Foundation.

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