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GENUINE CANADIAN MAGAZINE

FUSE MAGAZINE

The Dunlop Art Gallery Closes: Why you should care

Adrienne Lai on the resurfacing of minimalism in Vancouver

Florencia Berenstein on why floating to Australia is a bad idea

A cooking lesson from Yam Lau

4 more issues.

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FUSE MAGAZINE

Volume 27 Number 1 February 2004

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We'd also like to say thanks to Trish, whom we miss dearly.

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Peter White was curator-director of the Dunlop Art Gallery from 1984 to 1991.

editorial

If this issue is a little delayed, the blame can be laid on the board of the Regina Public Library that announced on November 26th that they intend to close the Dunlop Art Gallery and severely cut other library services that they offer to the public. When the press release reached our office, we were well on the way to finalising the content of the issue, almost ready to go to design.

Initial reaction to this news was a lament for the loss of a vital exhibition and research space, a unique experiment on how best to foster a sustained conversation on visual culture with the wider public — an experiment that, by all counts, was succeeding. It was apparent to us that it was necessary to change our course and gather, as soon as we could, the material that became the feature articles of this issue.

In the process of gathering this material, however, it became apparent that the closure of the gallery foreshadowed something. Among those we spoke with there is a sense of foreboding, a sense that all is not well — and that it might just be getting worse.

Maybe the announcement was amplified by other recent events, such as the closing of the Nova Scotia Arts Council (see issue 25:3).

Maybe the floating rumours that the Canada Council is undertaking a series of 'consultations' with visual artists across the country are making us worry. These rumours suggest that the Council is looking at revamping current individual artist grants with the aim of fostering "market sustainability." Isn't one of the basic tenets of the Canada Council support of non-commercial practices?

On the other hand, maybe the doom and gloom is merely a bit of pathos, amplified by our own precarious financial situation — we've seen a loss of more than twenty percent of our own government funding in the last two years. There are, however, some signs of hope — the current negotiations between CARFAC and the National Gallery (see the Short Fuse in this issue) among them. Maybe it is not as bad as it seems.

Whatever the case, we tracked down the right people, put together a feature section that gives context to the decisions made by the Regina Public Library board, that looks at the original motivations behind the establishment of the Dunlop, and that begins to outline what we have lost. And one more issue goes to press ….

– the editorial committee

Alas, a last minute message. This time, as we approached the final moments of getting the revamped issue together, moments after calling the printer to arrange press time and just as we turn our attention towards our March fundraising event, another press release reaches us. The draft of the 2004 municipal budget for the City of Ottawa indicates a $4.6 million dollar cut to cultural affairs. The calculators are still at work, but this represents a drop in per capita cultural funding from $3.89 to a mere 57¢.

In Ottawa this year, they don't even want to buy an artist a cup of coffee.

The Moorings of Art and Activism: An Australian Example

by Florencia Berinstein

One of the social functions of art is to crystallize an image or a response to a blurred social picture, bringing its outline into focus.

— Martha Rosler, *If You Lived Here: The City in Art, Theory, and Social Activism*

Issues of social justice and systemic marginalizations on local, national and global levels provide artists with the opportunity to contribute meaningful insight and criticality about the world around them. One such issue of epic proportions in Australia is the issue of the government's policies and treatment of asylum seekers. It has captured the imagination of many Australian artists who have combined art and activism to address these issues in their work. One such recent collaboration is the We Are All Boat People Campaign (WAABPC) by the boat-people.org group. While working in a very immediate, ephemeral and direct manner in public space, their work explores the construction of the all-white, all-male Australian subject and how that is constructed in and through the use of urban space. In their series of public projections, which is the focus here, they make use of urban space to question and open dialogue on issues of racism, xenophobia and nationality in Australia.

boat-people.org is a collaborative artistic effort of political activism that, as they state on their website, is concerned in "the broadest sense with the mental health of Australia…[what we face] is not so much a refugee problem as a crisis of xenophobia." Furthermore they "work with tropes already existent in public discourse, with shared archetypes, language and imagery, to make new connections and ideas available to mass audiences." Spearheaded by artists and comprised of activists, academics and educators based in Sydney, the group formed at a conference on media literacy and the project started in October of 2001. It was in response to the right-wing rhetoric manufactured by the conservative national government at the time, John Howard's Liberal Party, around the "threat" of asylum seekers largely arriving by boat (commonly referred to as "boat people") in the lead up to the national election of 2001. The group has become known for its projections, which consisted of a tall ship with the text "boat people" written underneath it projected onto the Sydney Opera House. Similar projections have also been mounted across the country in the major urban centres of Adelaide, Perth and Melbourne. The group has also organized various other art/activism events to commemorate Tampa Day (named after the Tampa Boat, a Norwegian freighter that rescued a couple hundred asylum seekers at sea and was prevented from docking); organized a Boat People Day and Rally in Sydney (on Good Friday in 2002, 3,301 paper boats were delivered to the steps of the department of immigration and multicultural and indigenous affairs); made t-shirts, buttons and postcards and maintain a website packed with information, past actions and activist tools.

Art in public space is hotly contested territory. The very fact that these terms separately — public, space and art — carry historical implications, fully articulated disciplines and are open to multiple political interpretations is at the crux of its complexity and debate. It is not the intention to enter into this debate here, but I will briefly sketch out the context for public art in order to situate the boat-people.org project. As academic Malcolm Miles puts it, "public art might, since definitions are mutable and cumulative, be taken to include the work of artists undertaking residencies in industrial and social settings, and… community arts programs…"[1] In addition to this, in his introduction to *Dialogues in Public Art,* Tom Finkelpearl explains that public art is associated with public agencies, exists outside museums and galleries and addresses a viewership outside that of the regular museum-going public. He adds that public is "usually associated with the lower classes" whereas private "is usually associated with privilege."[2] He attributes this to a modernist tradition that separated aesthetics from social context. My definition of public art similarly makes a clean break from the more conventional public art canon and is instead grounded firmly within a *public* context of the social and political. More important, public art engages with the built environment and relations within it, which invests it with the potential to reorder/reorganize space and its relations.

Australia is a large country in terms of landmass, approximately the size of the United States, but a small country in terms of population, with just over eighteen million people. The distinctly colonizing principle of *terra nullius,* or empty land, asserted that Aboriginal peoples did not use the land for a traditional agricultural purpose of laying down and harvesting crops, therefore the land was taken to be empty/empty to be taken. The concept of terra nullius combined with the early White Australia Policy of 1901, which effectively prevented any non-European, non-white immigration, are two important factors that had a most profound impact on an Australian sense of nationhood and a legacy that has informed conservative tendencies in the policies of both major political parties, the Liberal Party and the Australian Labour Party, for decades. Prime Minister John Howard's current national Liberal government has had an agenda of furthering this type of policy with their stolidly unwavering stance on detention centres for asylum seekers and the continuance of restrictive immigration legislation. It is within this historical backdrop that boat-people.org are

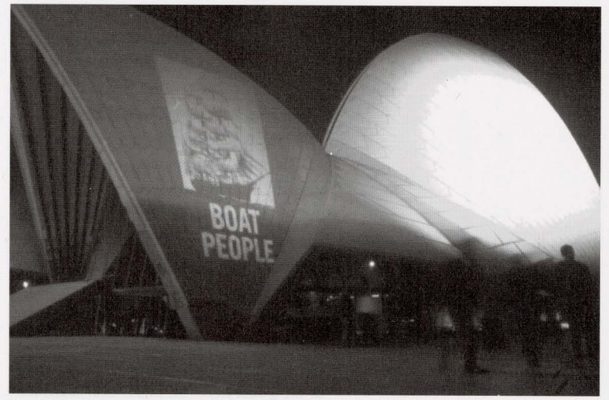


Photo: Tina FiveAsh

working to challenge the underlying and re-emerging regressive sense of nationalism.

The WAABPC project is what theorist Rosalyn Deutsche terms critical site-specific public art. The projections do not privilege the Sydney Opera House and the urban space on which it is located as a neutral, blank space, but rather it uses this site to foster "the viewer's ability to apprehend the conflicts and indeterminacy repressed in the creation of supposedly coherent spatial totalities."[3] To assume that this space is void of any meaning, contradictions or neutrality is false, and it is precisely the purpose of public art to point out these contradictions and complexities. It is in this way that a democratic space can be opened up to challenge an assumed Australian sense of place and space. Much like space cannot be assumed to be stable and given, theorist Doreen Massey argues that place is integrally linked to space and thereby also cannot be assumed to contain essential qualities that lead to a sense of nostalgia followed by stasis. Nostalgia and stasis of place are challenged by an anti-essentialist approach — authenticity of place and true characteristics are built on myths that are reliant on power relations that are formed over space. Alternatively, places "can be imagined as articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings, but where a large proportion of those relations, experiences and understandings are constructed on a far larger scale then what we happen to define for that moment as the place itself, whether that be a street, a region, or even a continent."[4] This re-conceptualization of space allows for positive linkages to be made between the global and the local and opens these spaces up to being thought of as processes, which in turn suggests an implicit potential for groups of people, designers, artists, architects and so on to intervene and change relations in space on an ongoing basis.

The acceleration of global capital and the rise of the global city — in which local economies and communities are locked into and interconnected with global forces — has radically changed how we experience space and time and, as Massey expands, "has given rise to the powerful notion that the age we are living in is one of a new burst of 'time-space' compression," which has resulted in a communal sense of disorientation, fragmentation of local cultures and "a loss of sense of place."[5] A byproduct of this instability and sense of loss of place is the fostering of a reactionary public discourse in the form of extreme nationalism and exclusionary places to alleviate people's distress. With the rise of politicians in Australia like Pauline Hanson and her One Nation Party — equivalent to the Canadian Alliance — a succession of right-wing politicians have firmly established a national ideology based on principles of exclusion grounded in the ownership of place. This sense of place draws on a mythic white subject that stirs up feelings of nostalgia and historical authenticity — of home, of an empty land — that is highly questionable. It functions under the rubric of an officially sanctioned government program of multiculturalism. Australian theorist and academic Ghassan Hage argues that the prevailing policy of multiculturalism in Australia today is much more insidious than overt racism in creating an exclusionary sense of place. He maintains that "White multiculturalism" actually works to confuse and keep from the public discourse "other multicultural realities in which White people are not the overwhelming occupiers of the centre of national space."[6] What the notions of "tolerance" and "cultural pluralism" effectively mask is a situation of control by which white multiculturalists keep non-white cultures, languages and behaviours on the margins while continuing to constitute itself at the centre of Australian culture, yet coming across as "tolerant" and "inclusive." These practices are "necessarily grounded in an image in which the nationalists construct themselves as spatially dominant, as masters of a territory in which they have managerial rights over racialized/ethnicized groups or persons who are consequently constructed as manageable objects."[7] This "specificity lies…in the construction of the other as an object of spatial exclusion" on a national level.[8] One obvious demonstration of this exclusion is the "ethnic caging" of asylum seekers in detention centres.

What Hage states is being caged is the ethnic will, that it is the government's way to provide a public example of what happens when one does speak out.[9] Given the globalization of cities, our interconnectedness is made that much more relevant, and the (perceived) threat of the Other that much more immediate. Since physical borders no longer keep people out, the multiculturalists have come to depend on Hansonites to express a desire that they can perceive as abhorrent, while continuing to foster a different, more hidden version of exclusionary space.

The boat-people.org projections occurred on a deeply meaningful site for Australia: an architectural landmark in its biggest city and the economic centre of the nation, an archetype for the country, or as artist Deborah Kelly, one of the founders of the group put it, "an icon of White Australia." The projection attempts to disrupt and challenge the universality of a cohesive Australian sense of place that is in reality grounded on a deeply xenophobic and false centrality of whiteness. Projecting a simple image of a tall ship with the words "boat people" is easily understood as representing asylum seekers, or "caged ethnics," to all Australians and non-Australians alike. It furthermore asserts that, with the exception of Aboriginal peoples, all Australians arrived on a boat. The We Are All Boat People Campaign exposes the contradiction and complexity of one true white Australian identity as solidified by belonging and entitlement to place. It also makes reference to Australia's penal-colony history and hints at the fact that this was far from being a *terra nullius*. There is a lasting aesthetic resonance to projecting a tall ship on the "sails" of the Opera House.

Furthermore, the site specificity of this work functions on another equally important level: the meaning of the Opera House as an international icon. In presenting the Opera House as a site of unity to tourists, the government sanctions that site as a neutral and "democratic" space. The Howard government relies on this unity to reflect a democratic nation, validated on the preservation of culture, tradition, civic beautification and historical continuity, which in fact has an effect opposite to enabling democracy. It subverts any potential for democratic practice so as to not appear authoritarian, what Deutsche calls an appropriation of public spaces, which is "a strategy, deployed by a distinctly undemocratic power that legitimates itself by giving social space a 'proper,' hence incontestable, meaning, thereby closing down public space."[10] It is also what Hage refers to as the exclusionary practices of multiculturalism. The projections then not only speak to a relevant political issue but also get at the heart of a different matter, that of demarcating the conflictual nature of this public space to reveal it as a site of democratic contention. Indirectly, the projections also address a much more fundamental issue about the character of public spaces.

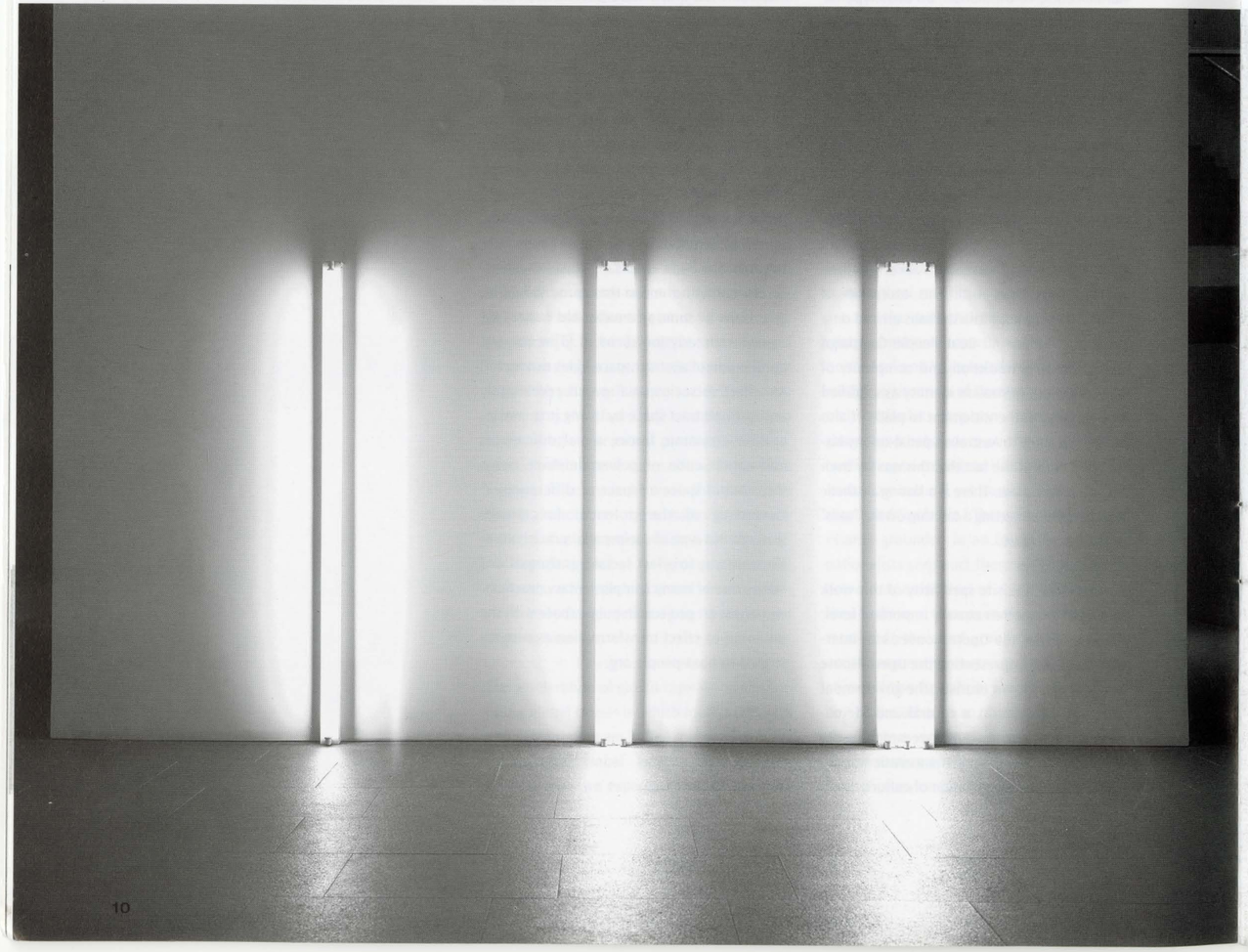
The WAABPC projection is the type of practice defined by Henri Lefebvre as the rescuing of everyday life from being taken over by abstract space, or what he terms sociospatial praxis. Herein lies the potential for empowerment: sociospatial praxis needs to have a spatial form, rooted in some way in spatiality, therefore taking over space is a prerequisite towards any radical social transformations. Lefebvre does not mean that space should be taken over by some new order, but rather that "space is already socialized, …[T]he present domination of abstract space hides this fact."[11] An effective sociospatial praxis reveals this aspect of abstract space by taking into consideration economic forces, social differences and construction of power. Lefebvre terms this kind of space a "space of differences."[12] Conceiving of the potential for change through this type of sociospatial praxis, not as the only way to effect social transformations but as one of many complimentary practices, can invest art projects in public space with the potential to effect transformation as demonstrated by boat-people.org.

Notes

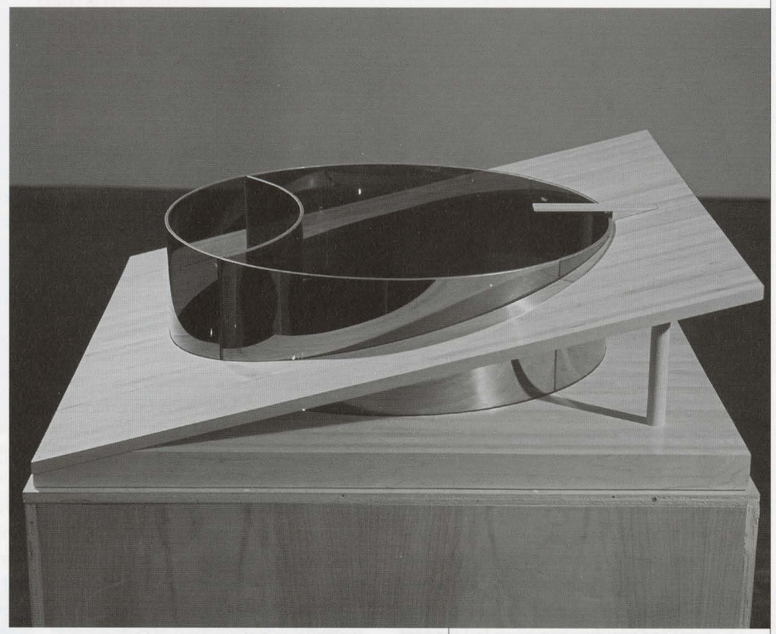
1 Malcolm Miles, *Art, Space and the City: Public Art and Urban Futures* (London: Routledge, 1997), 8.
2 Tom Finkelpearl, *Dialogues in Public Art* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000), x.
3 Rosalyn Deutsche, *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996), 262.
4 Doreen Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), 154.
5 Massey, 162.
6 Ghassan Hage, *White Nation* (Annandale: Pluto Press Australia, 1998), 19.
7 Hage, 48.
8 Hage, 48.
9 Hage, 113.
10 Deutsche, 275.
11 Mark Gottdiener, *The Social Production of Urban Space* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985), 128.
12 Gottdiener, 128.

Internationalism begins at Home: Revisting Modernism on the west coast

by Adrienne Lai



Dan Flavin, *the nominal three (to William of Ockham)*, 1963. Collection: National Gallery of Canada, © Estate of Dan Flavin/SODRAC



Dan Graham, *Swimming Pool/Fish Pond*, 1997. Courtesy: Contemporary Art Gallery

This past fall, three of Vancouver's major galleries displayed an uncanny thematic synergy with concurrent exhibitions featuring internationally renowned artists who dominated the art world in the late 1960s. The three exhibitions were largely composed of works almost forty years old, situated at the moment of — or which may have precipitated — modernism's waning. The Contemporary Art Gallery presented a varied assortment of Dan Graham works dating from 1965–2003; the Vancouver Art Gallery showed a number of Robert Smithson pieces, focusing specifically on work made in and around a 1969–70 visit to Vancouver; and the Helen and Morris Belkin Gallery at the University of British Columbia played host to *3 x 3*, a touring National Gallery exhibition of minimalist sculpture by Carl Andre, Donald Judd and Dan Flavin. The confluence of these shows, featuring such a closely interrelated company of artists, can only be partially explained by serendipity. What precipitated this convergence of historically oriented exhibitions of late 1960s proto-conceptual work by New York–based male artists? Why here? Why now? And, since a great deal of the work is specifically oriented away from the confines of the museum/gallery format, why show it in such a traditional context at all?

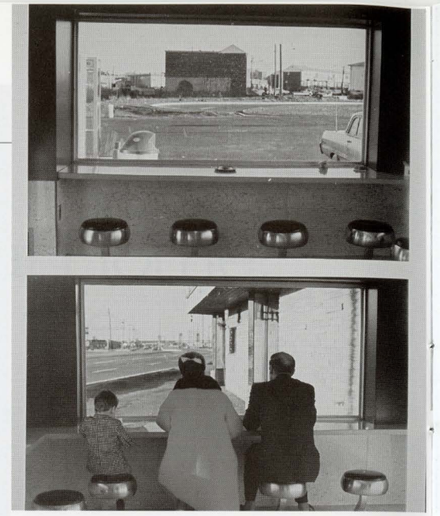
In many ways, the combination of Dan Graham, Robert Smithson and the minimalists with the contextual site of Vancouver makes perfect sense. The artists forming the much-ballyhooed "Vancouver School" (Jeff Wall, Ian Wallace, Roy Arden, and others) were profoundly influenced by and connected to these artworks, especially those by Graham and Smithson, with the former's contributions to the birth of photo-conceptualism and the latter's repositioning of art in relationship to an increasingly industrialized landscape. These exhibitions serve to remind the audience of the linkage and lineage between Vancouver's most well-known artists and the conceptual art superstars that preceded them. This is evident in the first paragraph of "Dan Graham in Vancouver," an essay by Ian Wallace included in the CAG's exhibition pamphlet, where he lists various important influences on the Vancouver photo-conceptualists, citing Graham, Smithson, and Judd, among others.[1] These influences continue on in the next generation of successful local artists, many of whom continue to work in a photo-conceptual vein — a legacy that has been significantly affected by the Vancouver School's presence in local post-secondary institutions and curricula over the last twenty years.

As with most exhibitions of historical art, in each of the three shows there is an underlying sense that its raison d'être is primarily pedagogical. There is a definite aura of gravitas present here; each exhibition is presented with a respectful nod to the pioneering work these artists performed to lay the foundations for conceptual and postmodern art. The seminal nature of these artists and works cannot be denied, and it is in fact emphasized by the exhibitions and their presentations. Broaching the idea of the canon (but avoiding the use of this particular "c"-word), these exhibitions provide Vancouver art audiences with a golden opportunity to experience this seminal work first hand. But what are the implications and repercussions of framing these artists with such historical adoration — especially since so much of their work reacted against such narratives? And why does Vancouver feel the need to pay tribute to its conceptual elders at this particular moment? This notion of reverence — and when and how to use it — is particularly crucial to the success of each exhibition, as many of the works (especially that of Graham and Smithson) hinge on their positions of irreverence: toward the gallery space, the possibility of representation and the idea of art itself.

Dan Graham, *'Split Level,' 'Two Home Homes,' Jersey City, NJ,* 1966/96. Courtesy: Contemporary Art Gallery

The Contemporary Art Gallery's scope was the widest and most general of all three exhibitions, spanning almost four decades and effectively constituting a kind of retrospective sampling of Dan Graham's work. The works were more or less divided into two sections: pavilions and architectural plans in one room and conceptual works (photos, magazine works, and *Body Press,* a 1972 film piece) in the other. (The exception to this taxonomy was a model for a proposed Gordon Matta-Clark museum, made in collaboration with Marie-Paule Macdonald, located alongside the photographic and text work.) CAG curator Reid Shier plainly states the exhibition's didactic motivations in his curatorial essay, explaining that the Graham exhibition was organized "in an effort to familiarize local audiences with the extent and range of his production, too little seen here, and to contextualize the importance of Graham's practice to the city."[2] The ambitiousness of attempting to mount such a comprehensive project may have exceeded the CAG's space and resources, however, as the show manages to feel both cramped and incomplete.

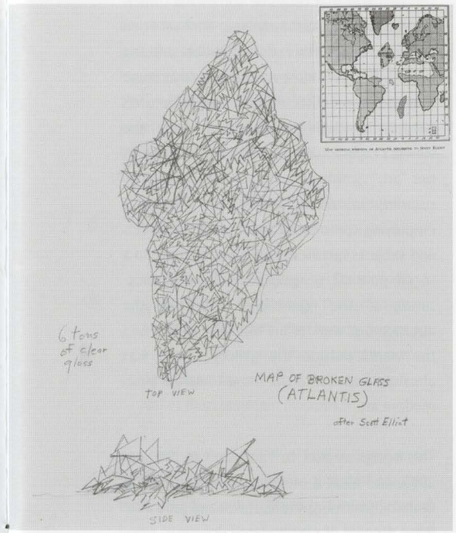
The exhibition's weaknesses lie largely in the selection and arrangement of the non-architectural work. Although the absence of many



Dan Graham, *View Interior, New Highway Restaurant, Jersey City, NJ,* 1967. Courtesy: Contemporary Art Gallery

significant Graham works — notably the mirror/perception-themed installation work from the 1970s — is understandable (the cost of borrowing, insuring, transporting and installing these works would likely be astronomical), the inclusion of some lesser works only serves to emphasize this gap. There are some truly mediocre examples of Graham's work present here — the colour photographs *Chinese Moon Gate, Vancouver* (1992) and *Monster Houses Under Construction, Vancouver* (1992), for instance, feel as if they have been included solely because of their local manufacture. More careful editing of the works included would have allowed the more interesting examples greater physical and psychological space. This breathing room might have also mitigated the show's overt seriousness and dry atmosphere, which muted the humorous quality present in pieces like *Detumescence* (1966). It is this deferential, almost star-struck attitude that interferes with a fully rigorous consideration of Graham's oeuvre. This is encapsulated by the placement of a photograph of Graham and a piece of paper bearing his signature at the gallery's entrance — strange, devotional relics testifying to the artist's authentic presence at the CAG.

By contrast, the Robert Smithson show at the Vancouver Art Gallery focused on a much narrower slice of history and employed a fairly traditional museological framework. Titled *Smithson in Vancouver: A Fragment of a Greater Fragmentation,* this show seems almost anthropological, relying heavily (as would any Smithson exhibition) on drawings, proposals and photo-documentation to stand in for site-specific and ephemeral works. The exhibition centers around three works conceived during Smithson's 1969–70 sojourn in Vancouver for the Lucy Lippard-curated VAG exhibition, *955,000: Glue Pour, Island of Broken Glass,* and *Glass Strata with Mulch and Soil* (all dated 1970). The remainder of works presented fill in the trajectory of Smithson's career and contextualizes these main three pieces in their shared relations to the idea of "non-sites," the sustained material and conceptual interest in glass and mirror and the impermanence and lack of romanticism toward landscape apparent in later large-scale earthworks like *Spiral Jetty* (1970).



Robert Smithson, *Atlantis, Glass on Island Project,* 1969. Collection: Vancouver Art Gallery

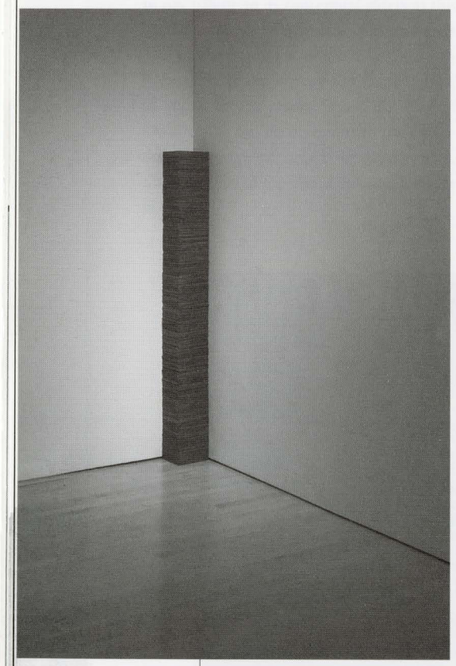
The more traditional chronological and discipline-specific organization works well here, as it helps to emphasize the astonishingly short slice of time represented — four to five years — in relation to the wide range of production. Though not overtly emphasized, Smithson's playfulness and contradictions are allowed to emerge despite the monumentalizing tendencies inherent in the context — a posthumous exhibition of an influential artist who died before his time. The inclusion of goofy works, such as the video *East Coast/West Coast* (in which Smithson and his wife Nancy Holt act out the roles of the stereotypical laid-back hippie West Coast artist and the intense, intellectual East Coast artist, respectively) and the drawing *Movie Treatment for Tropical Cargo* (which includes hilarious doodles with captions such as "dead tarantulas to be buried in applesauce") gently diffuses any impulses toward grandly tragic narratives. Also carefully handled is the framing of Smithson as staunchly anti-museum; although the work plainly operates against hermeneutic conceptions of the gallery, historical evidence reveals a more complex position. The didactic material's description of Smithson's feelings toward the museum reveals this ambivalence: though it states that "he believed the museum degraded the experience of art through its emphasis on categorization and order,"[3] it ultimately describes his relationship with the museum/gallery as "uneasy."[4] It is important to note that Smithson spent his career in critical complicity with galleries, museums and other art-world institutions. The VAG's unwillingness to paint Smithson as occupying a polarized anti-museum position demonstrates a sensitive understanding of an artist whose work was about the breaking down of constructed categorical oppositions.

Unlike the Graham and Smithson exhibitions, *3 x 3* at the Morris and Helen Belkin Gallery does not attempt to forge any connections between the exhibited artists and the city of Vancouver. However, it is instructive to consider minimalism alongside the work of Graham and Smithson. In many ways, minimalism represented art's last gasp in the gallery space, before such institutional containment became the focus of critique, as implied in the extracurricular excursions of Graham and Smithson into the spaces of commercial print magazines and banal industrial landscapes. Operating primarily as a showcase of minimalist sculpture, *3 x 3* is not just a tribute to the three sculptors Andre, Flavin and Judd, but also to the canniness of former National Gallery curator emeritus Brydon Smith, who saw fit to collect these

works/artists in the 1960s and 1970s. Vitrines of letters, documents, sketches and other ephemera in a side room add educational and informative elements (the correspondence between Carl Andre and the National Gallery over his plans to read the FLQ manifesto at his exhibition opening, leading to the show's last-minute cancellation, is particularly interesting), but they're mostly icing on a cake composed of nine seminal works (three by each artist — thus the exhibition title).

3 x 3 adheres to an orthodox conception of minimalism's intentions, highlighting the physical, experiential — and by extension, aesthetic — aspects of the sculptures. As Hal Foster notes,

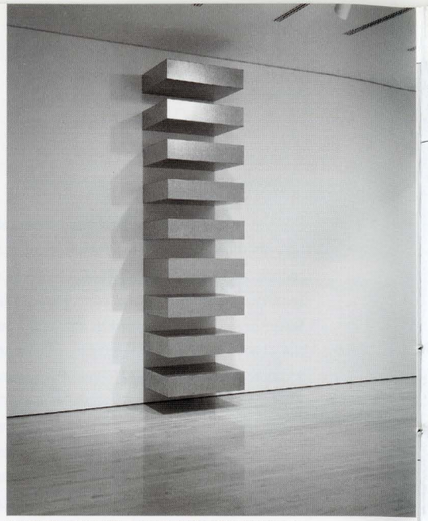
> [W]ith minimalism sculpture no longer stands apart, on a pedestal or as pure art, but is repositioned among objects and redefined in terms of place. In this transformation the viewer, refused the safe, sovereign space of formal art, is cast back on the here and now; and rather than scan the surface of a work for a topographical mapping of the properties of its medium, he or she is prompted to explore the perceptual consequences of a particular intervention in a given site.[5]



Carl Andre, *Pile*, 1977. Collection: National Gallery of Canada, © VAGA/SODART

Despite this emphasis on the particular characteristics of a specific space, the "given site" in which minimalist sculpture is shown is almost invariably the white cube space of a gallery. The installation at the Belkin does little to challenge this notion; smooth white walls and polished concrete floors provide the "neutral" backdrop, minimizing any extraneous information that may interfere with the viewer's ability to fully experience the sculptures — the feel of Andre's *144 Copper Square* (1969) underfoot, or the neon buzz and glow of Flavin's *the nominal three (to William of Ockham)* (1963). This dedication to a hermeneutic seamlessness extends into a temporary renovation of the Belkin's architecture. Normally, the gallery's outside walls have a channel running along the floor where baseboards would be, to visually correspond to the interior moveable walls, which rest on wheels and pivots and thus seem to float above the floor. For this exhibition, these gaps were filled so the walls continue to the floor without visual interruption.[6] This concentration on optimizing viewing conditions points to the most important function of an exhibition of minimalist art — the embodied, first-hand experience of the works. Whether or not primary experience is the key to dispelling minimalism's most common misconceptions and criticisms — namely, that it is simply an exercise in reductive abstraction and formal purity — remains to be seen.

Indeed, of all three shows, the white-cube display makes the most sense for the minimalists. Although their work does not struggle against gallery display like that of Graham and Smithson, the minimalists did cast a glance outside the sanctified space of art toward the materials and modes of industrial mass production. To some degree, the minimalists brought the banal outside world into gallery space, but still in a way that could be somewhat understood in a modernist language. Michael Fried protested against this contamination, arguing in the infamous 1967 essay *Art and Objecthood* that the minimalists' extension of sculpture's borders to include the space and time of the viewer's experience made it a theatrical object, not "art."[7] Smithson and Graham followed by running in the direction of "non-art,"[8] employing commercial and industrial models and subjects specifically for their reference to a social, political, geographic reality. This puncturing of the membrane separating the autonomous work of art from the viewer and the world outside the gallery's walls was absolutely critical in the move toward a post-modern art.



Donald Judd, *Untitled*, 1966, reconstructed 1975. Collection: National Gallery of Canada, © Donald Judd Foundation/VAGA/SODART

This brings us back to Vancouver in the year 2003, and what it means to view the work of Graham, Smithson, Andre, Flavin and Judd after three decades of postmodern false starts, revolutions, corruptions and declarations of the death of art. As Arthur C. Danto — a noted proclaimer of the end of art — observes, "the deep truth of the historical present, it seems to me, lies in the Age of Manifestos being over because the underlying premise of manifesto-driven art is philosophically indefensible."[9] While the historical significance of these works is undeniable, the radicality of their gestures has been softened by time, viewed through cynical twenty-first century eyes as being somewhat naive in their idealism. This cynicism — and pathos! — becomes even more acute when one realizes that their attempts to break away from traditional canonical and aesthetic narratives have ended with the works in the museum: safely housed under glass, collected for posterity, accruing historical and monetary value.

This notion of historical credibility and art-world cachet may provide some explanation for this convergence of established conceptual powerhouses. Vancouver, like many cities, has long aspired to establish itself as an international cultural presence. This desire has long been the source of tension between regional and international concerns, an enmity that persists, despite — or perhaps in part because of — the Vancouver School's international success. For many local curators, critics and artists, however, internationalism has won out. In his catalogue essay for *6: New Vancouver Modern*, a 1997 exhibition that illustrated this younger generation's engagement with global dialogues, trends and modernisms, Belkin Gallery curator Scott Watson writes:

> Issues around identity and community surface in a more diverse way in an "international" context, whereas regionalism has no new proposal for negotiating identity. It is through the criticality of "internationalism" that society begins to register in art and that strategies are developed for art that seeks to dispel rather than maintain illusions.[10]

The pros and cons of the local cultural scene holding internationalism as a central goal are too complex and numerous to be debated here. However, it is important to note how international exposure tends to be assumed to be desirable — something which, if it is not to be actively pursued, is at least not to be turned down if offered — especially as Vancouver marches toward the global spotlight of the 2010 Olympics.

The Graham, Smithson and minimalist exhibitions bolster this city's claims to international significance by reiterating historical and contemporary connections between Vancouver and a conceptual art vanguard, providing solid art-historical proof that these ties were in effect in the 1960s and continue to this today. However, this insistence seems to reveal some underlying insecurity. Historically, Vancouver has had a bit of an inferiority complex in relationship to Montreal and Toronto, particularly in the cultural realm. Other factors, such as Vancouver's still relatively small population, the dominance of its natural/geographical assets over its cultural ones and the physical distance from the major art centres of New York, London and even Los Angeles contribute to the precarious position of its cultural self-image. As much success as Vancouver's artists have enjoyed globally, this internationalism must go both ways, as it is also important to establish this city as a place where it is possible to view first hand seminal historical works by celebrated art stars. It is particularly through this last regard that Vancouver's international significance seems to be something about which it must convince itself — and cannot yet take for granted.

However, the recent movements of up-and-coming Vancouver artists suggests a comfort in the assumption of international aspirations that might not be possible for young artists in, say, Calgary or Saskatoon. This summer, with a number of local artists included in international touring group shows and biennials, more than one local curator remarked to me that the Vancouver artists represented the strongest showings, particularly when it came to the conceptual. Though this could be dismissed as a bit of rooting for the home team, Vancouver artists do tend to take their conceptual homework seriously — consider Damien Moppett (for a recent video, he quotes Anthony Caro's 1962 sculpture *Early One Morning* to point to the failings of modernism as a tool for achieving utopia) and Ron Terada (who has worked almost exclusively in dematerialized forms and institutional discourses for the past five years), for example. The Graham, Smithson, and minimalist shows may provide more of a refresher than a new lesson for these young artists. If nothing else, the in-the-flesh presence of these specific objects combats the indirect, simulacral transmission of their ideas to today's students: the generation of artists taught by the generation of artists taught by the Vancouver School.

The recuperation and revisitation of modernism's lessons is currently a hot activity in the art world, but these three exhibitions mean more to Vancouver than a mere keeping up with trends. These shows disclose some insights about Vancouver and its changing self-identity. The notion of proprioception may serve as a useful metaphor here. It's a theme that runs through all three exhibitions — with Graham and Smithson, it manifests itself in the preoccupation with mirrors and perception, and with the minimalists, it resides in the primary concern with phenomenological, bodily experience. The confluence of these exhibitions may provide clues to how Vancouver is negotiating its current embodiment: how it relates to itself and the signals it receives from the international art community.

Notes

1 Ian Wallace, "Dan Graham in Vancouver," Dan Graham exhibition pamphlet, (Vancouver: Contemporary Art Gallery, 2003), 8.

2 Reid Shier, "Split Infinitive," Dan Graham exhibition pamphlet, (Vancouver: Contemporary Art Gallery, 2003), 3.

3 Didactic text, *Smithson in Vancouver: A Fragment of a Greater Fragmentation*, Vancouver Art Gallery, 2003.

4 *Ibid.*

5 Hal Foster, "The Crux of Minimalism," *The Return of the Real* (Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 1996), 38.

6 William Wood, from a discussion of the *3 x 3* show, November 4, 2003.

7 See Fried's comments, "Art and Objecthood," anthologized in *Art in Theory 1900–1990: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, ed. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1992), 824–25.

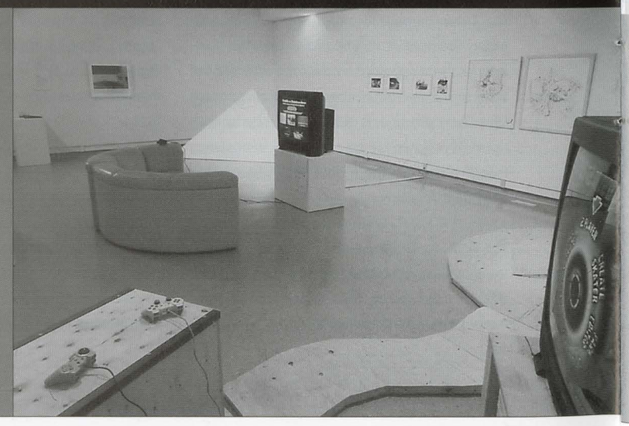
8 In a 1988 comment quoted by the CAG's didactic panels, Dan Graham observes: "I think the fact that *Homes for America* was, in the end, only a magazine article, and made no claims for itself as a work of art, is its most important feature."

9 Arthur C. Danto, "Three Decades After the End of Art," *After the End of Art: Contemporary Art and the Pale of History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 34.

10 Scott Watson, *6: New Vancouver Modern* (Vancouver: Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, 1997), 21.

Dunlop Art Gallery

On November 26th, 2003, the board of the Regina Public Library announced that they intend to close the Dunlop Art Gallery and severely cut other library services that they offer to the public.



weird economies

by Helen Marzolf

When Regina's mayor Pat Fiacco was elected, one of his first items crossed off his "to do" list was to replace the crown on the city's logo with a graphic focusing on the McCallum-Hill twin towers in downtown Regina.[1] As a follow up, the energetic Fiacco launched his "I Love Regina" campaign in 2003. As part of the campaign, black banners fluttered in the dry summer breeze along Victoria Avenue, Regina's main east-west artery. "Who died?" I wondered.

In November, days after he was reelected by acclamation, Fiacco and the RPL board closed the Dunlop Art Gallery, three branch libraries and dispersed the archival collection of the Prairie History Room. What precipitated the cuts? What was the rationale for cutting these particular services? And perhaps the most interesting question, why hasn't the library board advocated for investment in the Library?

The library board and its administration attribute accumulating financial shortfalls to the City of Regina's 1998 business-tax phase-out, which was partly an unsuccessful bid to persuade Eatons to maintain operations downtown, and partly an effort to stimulate Regina's economy. Also in 1998, the provincial government reassessed municipal property. There isn't space here to explain the arcane workings of assessment. It is enough to say the city lost revenue, largely through a series of appeals. In addition, the library buildings need repair, and its pension funds are feeling the pain of Enron and the bottoming out of tech stocks. The provincial government didn't increase its grant to the city, and, for a variety of reasons, business didn't rally and the projected increase in the tax base did not materialize. To be fair, the politically appointed library board, acutely aware that each homeowner in Regina pays big whopping property taxes, knew that arguing for an increase in taxes would be tough. On the other hand, the city's website paints a rosy economic picture, and millions of dollars are being invested in recreational infrastructure. There is money in Regina. The five percent of the municipal budget allocated to the library is not going to break the bank.

The board's solution to its budgetary shortfall has been to cannibalize library services. The rationale for targeted services was

All images in feature section are past exhibitions at the The Dunlop Art Gallery. All courtesy the Dunlop.

Top: "Ritual Coping," exhibition curated by Vera Lemecha, 1995.
Left: "Little Worlds," exhibition curated by Anthony Kiendl, 1998.
Bottom: "Godzilla vs Skateboarders. Skateboarding as a Critique of Social Spaces," exhibition curated by Anthony Kiendl, 2001.

imaginative. The library branches, for instance, were cut because there are just too many of them, especially in the downtown core and low-income areas. The board cited a Canadian Library Association statistical formula for branch placement. The Prairie History Room and the Dunlop Art Gallery were nixed because they are cultural services, and therefore have no place in a library with a mission to enhance "the quality of life in Regina by providing access to information for cultural, economic, educational, and recreational development."

Confused? It gets better. Consider these service reductions against what the RPL espouses as its core values. Its website explains how the library inspires lifelong learning from the fundamental skills of reading to *all other forms of literacy.* It supports physical, intellectual and cultural access for everyone. The RPL is a committed client-based organization. In addition, the library supports the principle of intellectual freedom and the right of each citizen to privacy of thought, communication and action within the law. Finally, the library is accountable to the community it serves for the effective and responsible use of resources, and the delivery of service that is responsive to the community's needs.[2]

The RPL board interprets this last value exclusively as "holding the line on taxes." It says the cuts are financially driven. But are they? Such drastic cuts to the library appear to be counter-intuitive, as cities scramble to identify themselves as participants in a *knowledge economy.* The City of Regina itself has identified a "knowledge corridor" along Broad Street from the First Nations University of Canada and the University of Regina to the downtown area. In fact, cultural organizations — in addition to their intrinsic value to the intellectual, cultural and social dimensions of life — also contribute potently to a community's economic well-being. Consider the Dunlop Art Gallery, for example.

The closure of the Dunlop Art Gallery stings. For several decades, it has been a lively part of the municipal, provincial and national culture as well as a partner in the library's information and knowledge-based endeavours. The Dunlop Art Gallery is at the centre of one of dozens of localized economies that, in turn, comprise Regina's economy as a whole. The Dunlop employs a handful of people; it provides entry-level jobs to recent graduates of the local University of Regina. It has been awarded over a million dollars in federal funding over the last decade, which in turn circulates to hardware and framing suppliers, designers, printers, photographers, artists, curators, writers, hotels, restaurants, audio visual suppliers and so on. It contributes to downtown businesses in a minute but consistent way, and provides professional development and services to local artists, dozens of whom are registered as small businesses. Obviously, I am not talking about mega-bucks here, but in a community like Regina, even a micro-economy contributes noticeably. The Dunlop's national reputation as an innovative and progressive "centre of excellence" contributes to Regina's ability to attract an educated workforce. You could hang a dollar value on that, too. Plus, the city has been working to transform the downtown into a residential area. Wouldn't the library-gallery complex add to the attractiveness, not to mention property values, of this plan?

For several years, the phrase "knowledge economy" has been circulating, a fancy-pantsy translation of the business-friendly lingo "ideas make money." Or, put more politely, an economy where the generation and exploitation of knowledge plays the predominant role in the generation of wealth.[3] But the colloquial understanding of the phrase "knowledge economy" typically refers to facile software literacy and data-harvesting, deployed to get an edge on the competition. Beyond that, there is considerable nuance to the new economy. It demands a skill set with well-developed critical thinking, refined analytical ability, literacy in visual and media formats and the capacity for synthesis of ideas from diverse sources. These skills are hard-wired into the production and reception of contemporary art, and they have been a core tenet of the Dunlop Art Gallery's curatorial activities since its inception, beginning with the work of Marjorie Dunlop in the 1940s, to Bruce Parsons, Glen Cumming, Wayne Morgan, Peter White, Ingrid Jenkner, Vera Lemecha, Anthony Kiendl, Noreen Neu and now Donna Wawzonek. Each adapted their curatorial practice to this essential, if little understood, capacity within the knowledge economy. You could think of the library-gallery partnership as an ongoing research and development seminar for the acquisition of these knowledge skills. If the library is the intellectual core of the community — the Dunlop has performed a catalytic role within it, as a place that sees itself as a reference centre and a place for lifelong learning — then the gallery's operations would seem to dovetail seamlessly with the library's aspirations within a knowledge economy. In fact, the gallery could be seen as a bankable commodity within this new economy. The unexpected and challenging nature of the Dunlop's curatorial trajectory add to a receptive and rich milieu for knowledge workers. Cultural infrastructure such as that offered in the Dunlop–RPL partnership contributes to an information and culture-rich downtown core that attracts young educated professionals, a fact that "brain gain cities" recognize and exploit:

> Talent helps make these top-tier cities diverse, tolerant and rich with the cultural amenities that help them steal still more talent... These cities tend to have a high percentage of residents who are artists, writers and musicians, as well as large and visible gay communities.[4]

Compare this prose with a Leader Post writer's decade-old phrase, "Regina is trying to run a Cadillac library on Chevrolet budget." Compare Seattle's enthusiastic plans for a new library with Regina's approach toward its library.

The RPL board has a progressive leadership opportunity in its library-gallery partnership, if they choose to acknowledge and build on it. Why haven't they acted on it? Why haven't they advocated for libraries? When I first heard about the cuts, I thought the board and administration had panicked. A call to the library director cleared up this misconception. He confidently defended the cuts: "Except for a vocal minority, we know Regina taxpayers are on side with this decision. We are on the cutting edge here… they are watching us across Canada." This succinctly conveys Cameron's contempt for people who actually use the branch libraries, the Dunlop and the Prairie History Room. Those who voice ideas about "community needs" are dismissed as a "vocal minority." (I have to wonder how the Regina taxpayers "on side" with the cuts have made their support known since I have only seen three or four supportive emails and letters to the editor.) Cameron's assessment of the significance of the cuts is accurate, I think. If libraries can be cut in Saskatchewan, the home of an extensive network of public libraries, they can be cut anywhere. The current library board will not be promoting the library as an investment in the city any time soon. They envision a Regina Public Library that costs and delivers less in order to build "political capital" with those determined to undermine educational, cultural and social infrastructure. The long-term consequences are impoverished communities and narrow economic and informational futures, a myopic and morbid economic strategy.

I have never been able to figure out the mysterious mechanism by which library board members are selected. I know of one person — a university professor who retired to Regina — who was keenly interested in an appointment to the RPL board: he was rejected several times. Darlene Hincks, who has a reputation for opposing any and all tax increases, was swiftly appointed to the library board last fall. The board is not about to capitulate to the mayor, city council or a group of citizens: they know the principle of administrative autonomy for libraries is a democratic principle that most detractors would not want to compromise. In this instance, the library board plays it both ways: political appointees charged with "autonomous" decision-making power.

If Regina wants to maintain its traction in the new economy, it must conceptually embrace and develop its considerable capacity for success in the knowledge economy. It is a university city with rich cultural infrastructure (if you can get your head around the idea that communication, new ideas, dissemination of information and opportunities for synthesis, discussion and meaning have a place in the economy); these so-called "soft" programs are, in fact, the infrastructure of the knowledge economy, just as much as bricks and mortar, cable TV and the internet connection hardware. Rather than trashing the amenities that offer transformative opportunities, the library board could chose to work with its constituencies, to build a model of information and knowledge infrastructure. Perhaps it is time for the multiple meanings of this special "capital" to be activated, with greater vigour and vision.

Notes:

1 The towers, incidentally, are owned by the Regina Hill family whose patriarch, Frederick Hill, is trustee emeriti of the Hudson Institute. Other members of the Institute include Alexander Haig, Francis Fukuyama, Conrad Black, and Richard Perle. See http://www.hudson.org.

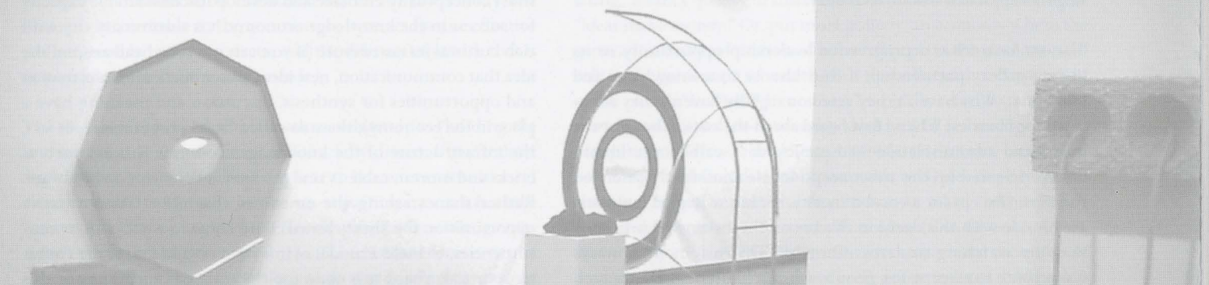
2 Paraphrased from Regina Public Library's statement of mission and values. See http://www.reginalibrary.ca/index.cfm?page=45.

3 United Kingdom Department of Trade and Industry, 1998. http://www.med.govt.nz/pbt/infotech/knowledge_economy/knowledge_economy-04.html.

4 Harden, Blaine. "Brain gain cities URBAN WARFARE: The Fight for Talent Among American Cities: Brain-Gain Cities Attract Educated Young" *Washington Post* (9 November 2003), A01.

An Interview with Marjorie Dunlop

by Helen Marzolf



I met with Marjorie Dunlop, former chief librarian of the Regina Public Library, on December 13, in her apartment in Regina, a few days after her ninety-second birthday. Miss Dunlop — she prefers the salutation "Miss"— laid the template for the library's national reputation as a progressive intellectual centre. Miss Dunlop was hired as a reference librarian by the Regina Public Library in 1936, and she was appointed chief librarian in 1949. Raised in Regina, she studied at the University of Toronto, receiving an BA (Honours) in modern history in 1933, and a certificate in library science in 1936. In 1972, the gallery was named after Miss Dunlop; in 1975, she was awarded an honourary doctor of laws degree from the University of Regina; and in 1999, the Saskatchewan Arts Board presented her with the lifetime award of excellence in the arts. Miss Dunlop considers the construction of the current Regina Public Library building the major accomplishment of her tenure. I asked her about the early years of her career, and how the library came to include the visual arts in its programming.

"Contingent: Eva Hesse, Martha Townsend, and Elspeth Pratt," exhibition curated by Ingrid Jenkner, 1996.

Marjorie Dunlop: Well, dear, it all started with the Western Canada Art Circuit (WCAC). The local group was active here, and they didn't have a place to hang the work. I think they tried City Hall for a while and then that petered out. So it was taken on by the library. Dean Kent [Charles Dean Kent] was the librarian then. He had the newspaper reading room — it was in the basement of the old Carnegie Building — lined with Hessian cloth, and we started to hang pictures.

I had the job of organizing the show, because I had taken a night class in art history with Dr. Snelgrove from Saskatoon, I guess. [laughter] I think his classes were for teachers — to upgrade them. Anyway, I arranged the shows and the maintenance men hung them. And we had some good shows. I remember a David Milne show, and another with prints by Sybil Andrews.

We were a member of the Western group: Winnipeg, a Brandon group — there were two lovely ladies in Brandon who attended. There was Victoria, and Calgary — [I] think Archie Keys was the one I remember who headed the group — then there was Saskatoon and Prince Albert, I think. We met once a year for meeting, and we would visit artists' studios.

Helen Marzolf: Marjorie, do you remember when you started showing the Western Canada Art Circuit exhibitions?

MD: That was really early, around 1947, or maybe 1946, I'm not sure. We all shared the costs of transportation. Yes, it was the WCAC that got the art gallery started.

Well then, we had to work for the new library, which was a big undertaking. We had to get a city by-law to help with the financing. We had to plan it, we had to explain our needs, and all. We had a gentleman — Horace Moses from Topeka, Kansas — who helped us with our planning.

HM: How did you find him?

MD: Well, one of the board members, Betty Davis — not the movie star — was very keen about the art gallery. Well, we heard that a man called Horace Moses of Topeka, Kansas would be speaking about building libraries for the American Library Association. Betty Davis and I persuaded the board to send us to the conference. We visited Horace Moses, and saw his library. He was quite knowledgeable about architecture and we were very impressed. We invited him to come to Regina to talk to our board.

And so, then, we searched for an architect and chose Mr. Izumi, a lovely, thoughtful man. But it was a lot of work. We had to persuade people. I remember John Archer, who had an "in" with the unions. He spoke to them, talking about what a new library would do for their kids. Oh, we had several speakers for the library, but we needed a new building. Do you know that old library had eighteen steps up to the lending desk?

I had an wonderful board. There was Betty Davis, of course, who I mentioned. And Mr. Bagshaw [F. Bertram Bagshaw], a lawyer who was a very good mediator; and Mr. Pollard, and Mr. Little, who helped us with the financial arrangements. Then there was Mr.

Hayes [Thomas Hayes], the warden of the jail! I thought, what the heck, the warden of the jail? But he was very good, too. Yes, I had a wonderful board. They were very future-looking. And they were very keen to take advantage of new ideas. They went along with things. [laughter]

HM: I am sure they did …

MD: Anyway, we now had the chance to get a proper gallery for our library. A gallery that would be right there, near the entrance of the library, and people would be attracted in. We wanted to build a gallery that people would enjoy, and that they would learn from. And they wouldn't necessarily have to go to a separate building to see art. And we hoped they would be intrigued to see what we had in our gallery.

It was well-planned, and we had some advice on it. We had advice from Ron Bloore — we've talked about that — and Norah McCullough. It was a little larger than we had thought, I remember that. And now, of course, it is all equipped with humidity controls, so we can show very expensive exhibitions. We were very proud when we got our new gallery and our new library.

HM: As you talked about the Western Canada Art Circuit, it sounds as though the library was the first place where professional art was shown in Regina, except for the ad hoc exhibitions organized at the Regina Campus college of art in 1935.

MD: I think so. I think that's right. There were no commercial galleries. And I think the MacKenzie was a little bit later. I am not just sure about the dates of that. There was a lack of space to show pictures, for sure.

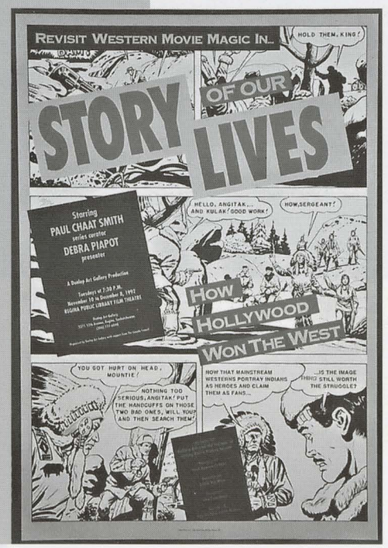
HM: The Library seemed to have many cultural programs: film screenings, sounds recordings, concerts, art rental. Can you talk about that?

MD: When I was in Topeka with Horace Moses to see his library, they had a picture loan collection, but it was prints, reproductions. But we went into originals, and we supported local artists by buying their pictures. And by exposing them, and by renting them out for a very low fee. It was a popular service. I don't think that was done anywhere before.

HM: Marjorie, tell me when, approximately, this started.

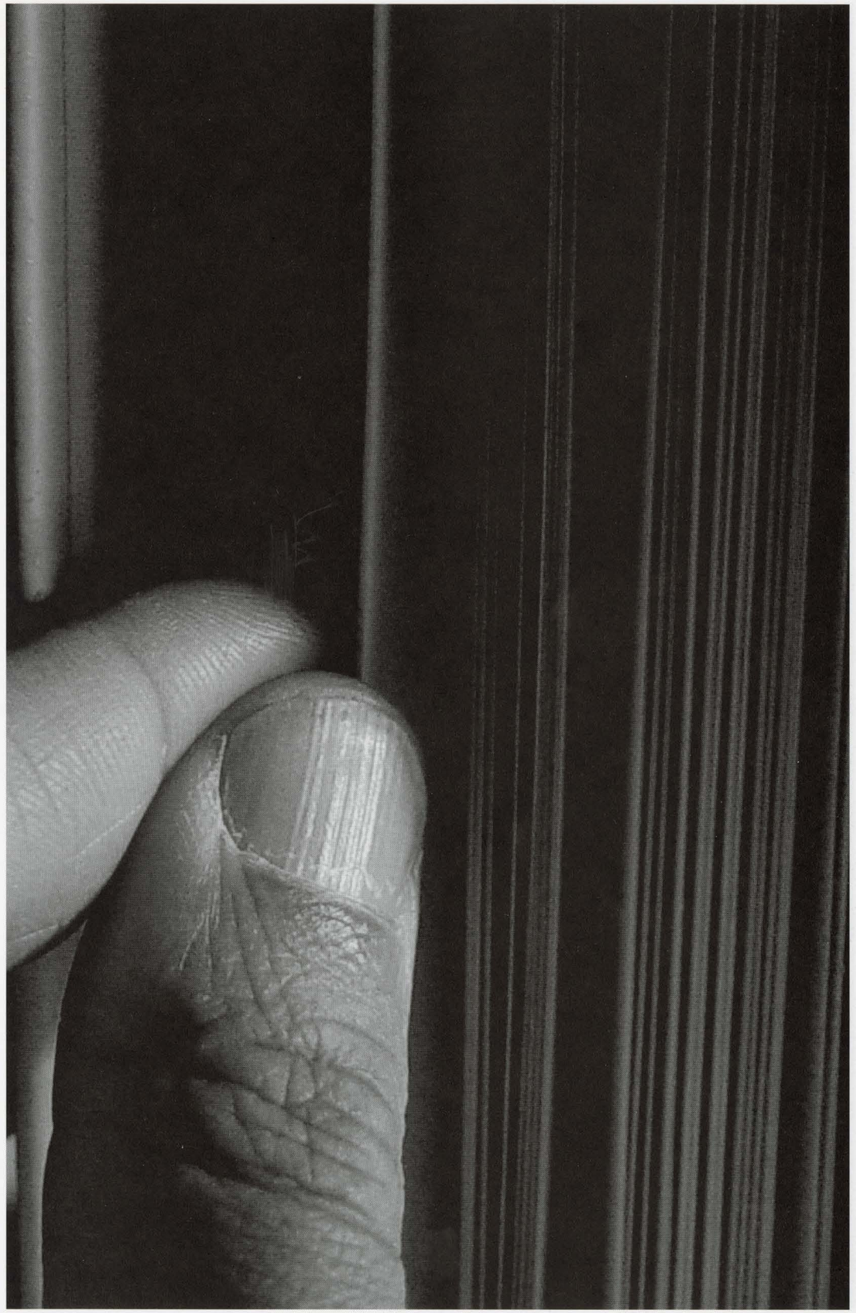
MD: Well, in 1962, dear, it was part of the plan. It was a very fine collection, built up over the years by our specialists. It is still in operation.

Our first curator was Bruce Parsons, and he got very closely associated with some musicians, and they tried new things, and they tried them in the Gallery. We had some very exciting times. And then we had a show of Lorraine Malach and she borrowed candles from the Catholic churches. Her exhibition, *My Polish Ancestors,* was painted on large doors — very effective. I remember we had a



Left: "Tilt!" exhibition curated by Wayne Morgan, 1974.

Right: "Story of Our Lives: How Hollywood Won the West," exhibition curated by Paul Chaat Smith, Critic-in-Residence, 1992.



Cooking Lessons (an artist's book)

My stepfather loves to cook, especially for others. He is well known for his skill. Though now retired, friends and relatives continue to reminisce about the wonderful meals he used to prepare. These occasions were permeated by a sense of communion and harmony. Surely, when your stomach is filled with a memorable experience, the world too, seems so kind and full.

While my stepfather takes pride and great interest in providing for the happiness of others, he is modest about his gift. In fact, he has never once spoken about it, preferring simply to work quietly in the kitchen instead. Though I can tell you the dishes that come from his hands are so refined and subtle. You cannot imagine how the simple ingredients he uses can produce something so deep and indescribable. Observing the way he works, I learned that good works result from a discipline that is spontaneous. There is mystery in all this.

I believe my stepfather feels cooking to serve others is something that is demanded of him; and this has a lot to do with his experience. He was born into a well-to-do family in China. During the war, however, the family lost its fortune. As a child, my stepfather recalls, he was always hungry. He also said he saw how fragile life was around him. I am certain that because of these experiences, he took upon as his responsibility to ensure that those around him will always have a full stomach.

So it is around and through cooking that he feels, I think, answerable to the world and to receive his place within it. My stepfather has never written down his recipes. In recent years, my mother has taken over a lot of the responsibilities in the kitchen. Her cooking too, is good. This cookbook is dedicated to my parents. For whatever I happen to contribute to the world, is only that which I have received from them.

Some of the recipes collected in this volume are suggested by friends and relatives: they are dishes that they like most from my father and would like to see included in this book. Others are selected by my parents and myself. The recipes cover a wide range of dishes. Some of them are common ones that you can find in most Chinese restaurants. Others are simple dishes mostly made at home. These are not likely served in restaurants, nor found in other Chinese cookbooks. However, they could be just as special and delicious. I have omitted the more refined and complicated recipes that only a professional chef could make. For the purpose of the book is that you would try your hands at it - cooking is a practice, a way of life.

Steam Eggs

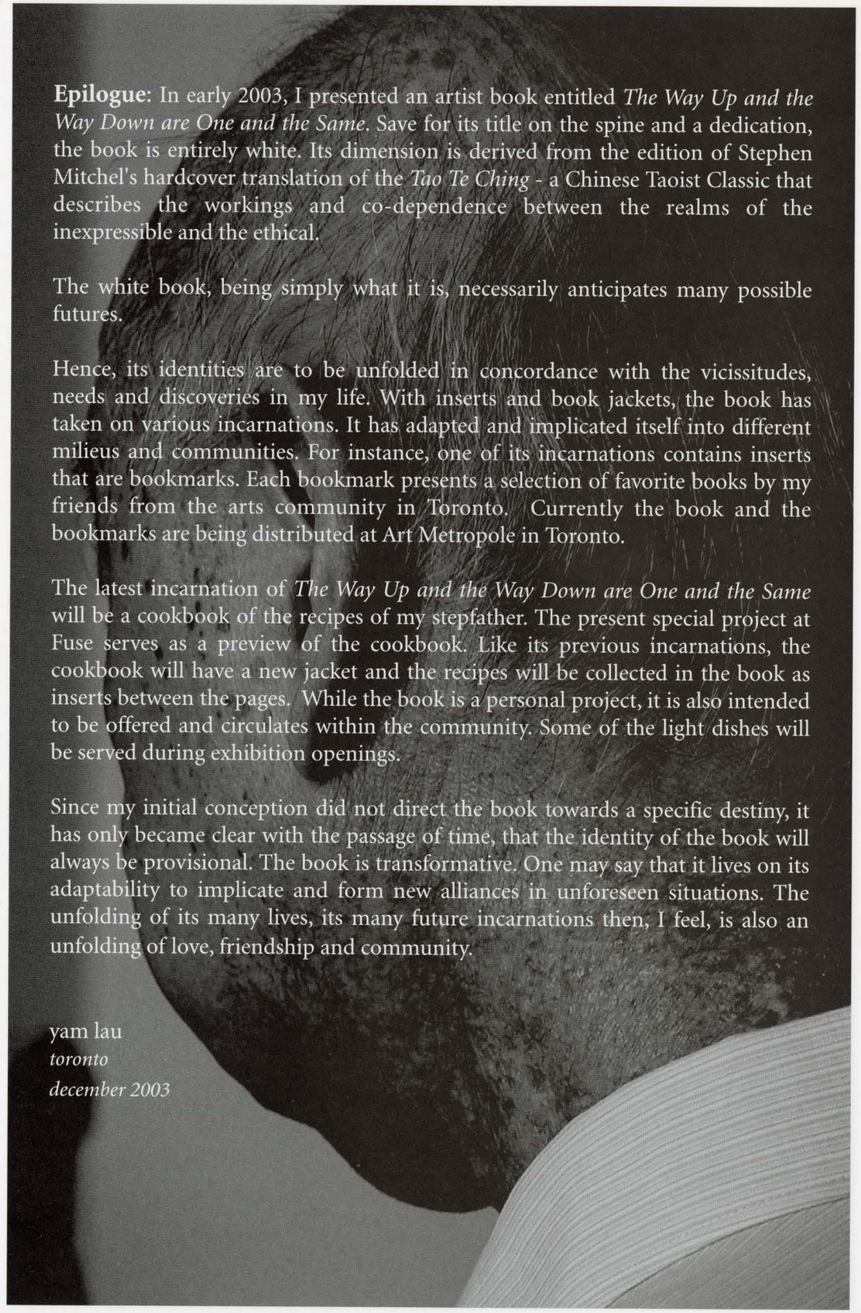
The beauty of this dish lies in its simplicity and purity. Hence, it is served in many households, especially the ones with children. For children are very fond it. I have watched them enjoy this dish enormously. It is almost without fail that they would spontaneously help and feed themselves to it. The dish's soft and sooth texture requires little effort to swallow. It must be like pudding or jello to them.

The truth is that the dish is very delicious. Although modest and easy to make, it is elegant. It can be very refined too when expensive ingredients, such as sun dried scallops, are added to it. You will not likely to find this almost too ordinary dish in a restaurant. As for my moher, this is also one of her favorite dishes from my stepfather.

Ingredient (serves 2)
Two eggs, water, salt, soy sauce.

1. Beat eggs thoroughly in a bowl.
2. Add two parts water and a pinch of salt.
3. Prepare water in a pot and bring to boil.
4. Steam eggs in boiling water for 5 minutes. Do not over steam.
5. Add soy to season.

You may add sun dried scallops, sun dried mushrooms and scallions to enrich the flavor of the dish. Chinese sun dried scallops and mushrooms need to be soaked in water for a couple of hours to become soft. Use the same water to mix with the eggs for steaming. This will introduce the flavor of the scallops or mushrooms to the steam eggs.



Epilogue: In early 2003, I presented an artist book entitled *The Way Up and the Way Down are One and the Same*. Save for its title on the spine and a dedication, the book is entirely white. Its dimension is derived from the edition of Stephen Mitchel's hardcover translation of the *Tao Te Ching* - a Chinese Taoist Classic that describes the workings and co-dependence between the realms of the inexpressible and the ethical.

The white book, being simply what it is, necessarily anticipates many possible futures.

Hence, its identities are to be unfolded in concordance with the vicissitudes, needs and discoveries in my life. With inserts and book jackets, the book has taken on various incarnations. It has adapted and implicated itself into different milieus and communities. For instance, one of its incarnations contains inserts that are bookmarks. Each bookmark presents a selection of favorite books by my friends from the arts community in Toronto. Currently the book and the bookmarks are being distributed at Art Metropole in Toronto.

The latest incarnation of *The Way Up and the Way Down are One and the Same* will be a cookbook of the recipes of my stepfather. The present special project at Fuse serves as a preview of the cookbook. Like its previous incarnations, the cookbook will have a new jacket and the recipes will be collected in the book as inserts between the pages. While the book is a personal project, it is also intended to be offered and circulates within the community. Some of the light dishes will be served during exhibition openings.

Since my initial conception did not direct the book towards a specific destiny, it has only became clear with the passage of time, that the identity of the book will always be provisional. The book is transformative. One may say that it lives on its adaptability to implicate and form new alliances in unforeseen situations. The unfolding of its many lives, its many future incarnations then, I feel, is also an unfolding of love, friendship and community.

yam lau
toronto
december 2003

concert downstairs and the audience moved upstairs to the gallery to see what was there. And they started having a little reception afterwards, and it became quite a popular thing to do

HM: Now what about film, when did that start in library?

MD: Well, the National Film Board, you know, was making film available and the library took on that aspect of the film service, and screened their films. We also had recordings. There were a lot of new things happening in libraries, every new form of information. And programs…

HM: What kinds of programs?

MD: The programming usually originated through the art gallery, really. And it depended on what connection was made with some clever people in the community and what they wanted to do and whether they had a place to do it.

HM: So programming would reflect the interests of the community?

MD: Yes, they'd need a place to perform, and they looked to the library. In the early days, my early days, the main thing libraries did was to purchase and lend books, which was an important service. Gradually there was greater interest in libraries, and we developed our national library — I don't remember what year it was. And then the CLA developed. So definitely things were changing. Libraries became more than just lending books; they became information centres. And cultural centres. And our libraries took advantage of what was happening.

HM: It seems to me there was tremendous optimism then. And an attitude directed toward building their communities.

MD: The people wanted what we could do for them. I know they enjoyed their library. And we were faced with building a new central library building. And a lot of our thought went in to that: what it would be like and how it would serve the people. What did we need? While that was going on, we used book trailers to service the outlying areas; some of them even had pictures along with their book trailers. We were always into promoting the arts, I guess.

HM: Was your support of the visual arts unusual for a library?

MD: I think the first that I heard tell of a gallery in a library was in London, but that didn't work out. It was a separate thing , I believe…

HM: And hiring professional staff — do you remember other libraries with a curator?

MD: Since we've had our gallery in the library, there have been other galleries in libraries, but I don't think they had professionals look after them. They just had pictures. We decided we had to have someone look after this. And we hired a young man, Bruce Parsons, who had been a graduate of the Ontario College of Art. He came to us from Banff, where he had a summer job. A bell hop, I think he was. He and his young wife came, and they settled in and we had lots of fun with our gallery. We had fun after the shows opened. You can imagine. Bruce Parsons got us started. He was very good at programming. Mind you, he was a lone worker. We have had wonderful people on our staff to develop the gallery. I didn't have a vision of what it has become; it's wonderful what it has become due to clever staffing.

HM: Do any of the exhibitions stand out?

MD: The one by Lorraine Malach, *My Polish Ancestors.* And then the chap from Calgary, you know, one of the Regina Five — Ted Godwin. Well, he was very active. He painted tartans, and we had a big show of his tartans. So we all had to have tartans. I had a tartan skirt. The men had tartan ties. Ted had some kind of advertising job, so he made posters advertising the show, and he had them out on the street. We had fun about that. And we had a concert for his tartan exhibition too. I remember those two shows particularly.

Every one of our curators have added something special. They all had a gift. Glen Cumming was a great display man. One of the artists, Ann James, liked the way he arranged her exhibition so much, she had him go to Toronto to help with it when it was shown there. Oh, there was a fuss about that show. The wife of the chair of the board was very incensed by Ann James' work. Oh, it was very tricky. I asked Glen to come to the board meeting, and he did. He did a good job. We didn't take it down.

Then, of course, Wayne Morgan had his pinball machines, which was quite a unique thing, and went over with great success.

HM: Yes, that exhibition put the Dunlop on the map.

MD: Then we had Peter White, and then we had Helen Marzolf. [laughter] And Anthony Kiendl, he was very good, too. I remember Lorne Beug had a very interesting show for us. With a tent. There was a tent and a museum. I really liked that exhibition.

HM: That was during Peter White's time. Suzanne Posyniak curated that one…

MD: I have met lots of interesting people in the gallery. It has made a great deal of difference in my life. I am all for having a gallery in a library.

HM: You had the foresight to set the conditions for that kind of work, so that kind of innovation could happen .

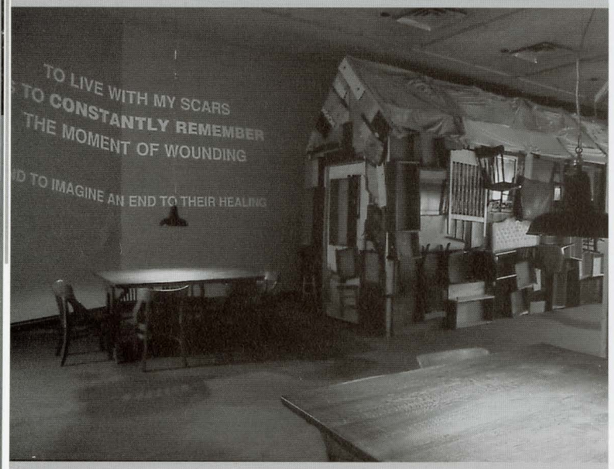
MD: I think, dear, I let them do what they wanted to do. [laughter] They knew a whole lot more about it than I did.

HM: Isn't that the mark of good leadership?

MD: I enjoyed myself, knowing clever people. I remember some strange things I had to do to be cooperative. I remember one time I had to allow one of the artists to break a raw egg into my palm, and hang onto it. I remember we had a carpet, and I was so concerned about the carpet that I ran over to where there was linoleum. I don't remember the name of the artist…

HM: That was Shauna Beharry's performance.

MD: I don't [know] what that was all about, but I guess it was very important, holding a raw egg in my hands. [laughter]



"TREMOR: Rita McKeough," exhibition curated by Helen Marzolf, 1989.

HM: There are a lot of ways you could interpret that. There were quite a few people who had raw eggs in their hands that day. I think you could say it was about the very thing we are discussing: having faith, or trust I suppose, in what this enterprise of contemporary art could mean.

MD: Well, you know, there was always a real nice atmosphere at the library. I think people found it a friendly, interesting place. That was our job: to make it friendly and interesting and worth attending.

HM: How do you account for your success?

MD: It was the people and the staff. We got very excited when things worked out well in the way of a program, you see. And we really cared. On film night, if we if we had a crowd, we were very pleased. We took a personal interest in everything, I guess. But things get bigger and they change. And so that was life in that time. And I had no idea that our gallery would become so important and be a good example for others to follow, and that it would have a reputation across Canada.

HM: Marjorie, we all think you did an incredible thing by creating that gallery. I have a feeling we are winding up here. Do you want to add anything else?

MD: You know, dear, I think it's time for a drink. I have some Dubonnet or tea. I think I still have some herbal tea. Does that stuff go bad?

HM: I'll take the Dubonnet.

MD: Me, too. [laughter]

It Was Fun While It Lasted …

by Peter White

I have long thought privately of the Dunlop Art Gallery as a kind of ongoing social experiment conducted by the Regina Public Library. Not wanting the Dunlop to be seen as anything less than a core service, I have been hesitant to characterize it this way publicly. With the gallery now on the chopping block, however, the cat is out of the bag, and these tensions need to be explored to understand both the gallery's success and its apparent fate.

The Regina Public Library has included an art gallery since 1962. Named in 1970 in honour of retiring chief librarian Marjorie Dunlop, whose brilliant and innovative idea the gallery was, the Dunlop has been distinguished by Miss Dunlop's far sighted and astute vision. Miss Dunlop understood clearly that if a gallery was to be effective in these circumstances, it would have to be integrated into the library, not simply housed within it.

This incorporation took several forms. One was physical. The impetus for the gallery had been the need and opportunity to build a new central library building. To this day, Kiyoshi Izumi's design remains an exceptional example of dedicated-use public architecture. It combines large, open, light-filled spaces with more intimate and personal ones. The gallery itself is located just inside the main entrance, so that all patrons pass it on their way in and out of the library. Both the physical accessibility of the gallery and its scale (a beautifully proportioned 1500 square-foot "shoebox" with a thirteen-foot-high ceiling) make it a harmonious fit with the overall structure and sensibility of the building.

At the same time, Miss Dunlop was clear that the gallery was not going to be a soft space, a well-intended but essentially amateur operation to spruce up the main business of the library. From the outset the gallery operated as a line department of the library. Its curator/director reported to the chief librarian and served with other department heads as a member of the library's senior management group. In keeping with this, it was stressed that those who headed the gallery would be fully qualified art professionals. Not only would they know their own business, but they would be able to work as an equal with other library managers and department heads.

The most important aspect of this integration, however, was philosophical. While public libraries can be notoriously myopic, Miss Dunlop always understood RPL as inclusive and outward-looking, and interpreted its mandate as a cultural institution broadly and socially in terms of community circumstances. These included Regina's geographic isolation and limited cultural amenities. Contrary to the stereotype of the public library as straitlaced or prim, RPL operated with flair and energy. In the absence of a public art gallery in Regina, the library had been exhibiting art since the 1930s. As early as 1949 it began to build and circulate a film collection. With the opening of the new building and the formalization of the gallery, the library continued to build on this progressive orientation. Under the leadership of Ron Yeo, Miss Dunlop's successor, it added a full-blown audio-visual department that included operation of Regina's only repertory film theatre; instituted a Prairie History

"Work Weather and the Grid: Agriculture in Saskatchewan," exhibition curated by Rosemary Donegan, 1991.

collection and study centre; was among the first public libraries to develop a writer-in-residence program; included satellites of the Dunlop in new branch libraries; aggressively provided delivery of books and outreach services to shut-ins; established joint governance of one of its inner-city branches with the largely First Nations residents of the neighbourhood; and, in the 1980s, became a national leader in the development of public-literacy programs.[1]

One of the interesting things about RPL is that, while it has never been regarded as more than adequate in terms of its book collections, it has always been absolutely tuned into public concerns and issues. Not only did it adjust to changing times and circumstances, but it was also a leader in articulating them. The services it has provided the city of Regina have been extraordinary and decidedly in touch with the lived needs and experience of its citizens.

A public library is a democratic trope. It is a particularly open public location that privileges knowledge and inquiry. This is not only an unusual but a remarkable context for the presentation of art. Add to it the benefits of what has been RPL's distinctive institutional culture and the possibilities of the Dunlop come into focus. While working there, it never failed to amaze me how many people visited the gallery and that you could put before this highly diverse audience some of the most obscure work contemporary art has to offer and people would still find a way of connecting with it in meaningful ways.[2] The point, however, was not numbers or providing a sanctuary for difficult art, but of working with the rich framework the library provides for brokering the kind of useful and meaningful relationship between art and the public that everyone may agree is desirable but is rarely achieved in stand-alone galleries. The approbation the Dunlop has enjoyed and the numbers of those who have come to its defence may not be the most important standard but they are revealing in terms of the gallery's success in exploiting its extraordinary mandate.

Part of the beauty of the Dunlop is that, in a world that deeply resents art galleries for their elitism and their imposition of cultural standards, it has been in the *de facto* position of squaring high cultural assumptions with genuine popular appeal. The undeniable benefits of the "white cube" for the display of art exist but are accompanied by few of the qualities that have made it a code term for the modernist art gallery's powers of isolation and repression of content. On the contrary, aesthetics can be endlessly manipulated as part of the larger meanings or significance work may have. Scale has also been significant. In a gallery the size of the Dunlop, art can speak strongly, with criticality, but it is difficult to be threatening or intimidating in a building saturated with such a broad range of knowledge and opinion.

"Marginal Recession: Edward Poitras," exhibition curated by Helen Marzolf, 1991.

One of the lessons of the Dunlop Art Gallery is the extent of the role played by the context in which art is presented. This is particularly significant at a time when the conventional art museum itself has become, as the cultural theorist Andreas Huyssen has termed it, a "mass medium."[3] Even as it may retain its prevailing — one could add sanctimonious and fetishistic — aura of specialized knowledge and import, with its shops, restaurants, audio guides, lifestyle potential and so forth, the museum is equally identified with gratifications usually associated with popular entertainment. When he wrote this almost ten years ago, Huyssen was not so much judgmental about the collapsing of high and low as he was hopeful that the broadened reach and public for the museum could be exploited for the very discursive possibilities the elitist modernist museum actively suppressed. One can judge for oneself whether this optimism remains justified; in terms of the Dunlop, it has long been achieved. Within its terms of reference, this discursive dimension, what Huyssen calls "the serious and meticulous appropriation of cultural knowledge," has been effectively in play throughout its history.

The question arises as to why the Regina Public Library could possibly turn its back on what, on the surface, should be a winning formula. Over and above the outlook and abilities of the library's leadership, which are a significant factor, the larger reason has to do with changes in the conception and understanding of the public library in general and RPL in particular. If the public library has enjoyed a special, even privileged place in this society as an expression of liberal, humanist values, these values are no longer secure. If not irrelevant at the least they appear increasingly old fashioned in an accelerated global environment marked on the one hand by high levels of consumption, media and technology, and on the other by the claims of those who were excluded by those values. One of the principal political expressions of this complex and conflicted situation has been the increasing rationalization of the public sphere and the ham-fisted economics that accompany it.

It is here that tensions with the library that now threaten the Dunlop come into the open. In this confrontational and often ideologically driven atmosphere, the Regina Public Library has become a proverbial football of fiscal hold-the-line politics. Not only has it experienced a serious decline in financial commitment from the city over the past decade but there has also been a marked erosion in the quality of its leadership and services as a result. To put it bluntly, understood from the library's perspective, what can be the point of maintaining an art gallery in the face of such grudging support? This is a sad and disturbing question because it implies a recognition that for all it has accomplished, the library as a whole never really bought it or got it. My own sense is that the Dunlop, despite its success, never transcended the condition of experiment or was truly absorbed into the culture of the library. While the public didn't appear to have difficulty relating to the gallery, I'm not sure the same could be said of the institution as a whole. As head of the gallery I always understood implicitly that perhaps the most critical part of my job was keeping my librarian colleagues onside. Despite the open-mindedness of those I worked with, I think I never doubted that in a serious crunch, library essentialism — a certain narrow-mindedness centred on the book — would climb out from under the rock where it had always been lurking.

One doesn't have to be a defender of the humanist consensus that has sustained public libraries to mourn this turn of events. It's not a matter of returning to the limitations of this outlook but recognizing the failure of the Regina Public Library to understand and defend its own distinctive history of multi-disciplinary services, adaptation to change and close contact coupled with respect for its community. Dollars may be the reason given for killing the Dunlop, but the deeper reason is that while the experiment was successful, its results could not be sufficiently valued or understood institutionally or politically. What makes me angry and makes this feel in its own small way like the death of hope, is that what the Dunlop has stood for, not to mention the Regina Public Library, is not only desperately needed but is also actively desired in these difficult and uncertain times.

Notes

1 In addition to the Dunlop Art Gallery and three inner-city branch libraries, both the Prairie History Room and the writer-in-residence program are to be eliminated as part of the Regina Public Library's planned service cuts.

2 With more than 70,000 visiting the gallery and attending its programs annually, the Dunlop has a dollar-per-visitor ratio unmatched and unapproached by other public art institutions.

3 See Andreas Huyssen, "Escape from Amnesia: The Museum as Mass Medium," in Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia*, Routledge, 1995, 13–35.

A Tale of Governance

by Merrilee Rasmussen

Libraries in Saskatchewan have been regulated by provincial legislation that can be traced back to the ordinances of the Northwest Territories, before the creation of the province in 1905. In other words, even before rural electrification and highways, the people of Saskatchewan placed a high priority on the benefits of having libraries in their communities. Our grandparents and great-grandparents, who homesteaded here early in the twentieth century, turned to libraries in the middle of their geographical isolation and the challenges of a harsh climate.

Since 1905, the provincial Public Libraries Act has provided for the establishment and operation of municipal public libraries. The legislation has remained pretty much the same during all of this time. Under the legislation, the people of an urban municipality can petition to have a library established. The people of Regina petitioned to establish a public library in 1907. The petition, which had to be signed by ten percent of the electors of the city, forced the city council to hold a vote on the question of establishing a library; that vote passed and the Regina Public Library was born.

The Regina Public Library (RPL) is a municipal library under the Act. This is in contrast to regional libraries, which are established in the area of southern Saskatchewan outside Regina and Saskatoon, or the northern library system established for the northern part of the province. The Act provides that the library is to be managed by a board consisting of the mayor plus either six or eight persons, not more than one of whom can be a councilor. The library board members are appointed by city council and council must approve the amount of money that will be provided to the library through the library mill-rate. In establishing the legislative framework in this way, the provincial legislature sought to strike a balance between the library board, who as library trustees were advocates for the library and for library services, and the city council, who were responsible for approving the library's funding. The city council is not given free rein over the library by making it a department of the city, but neither is the library board free to act without regard to the financial concerns of the city. And a provincial minister of the crown, at present the minister of learning, is responsible for the administration of library legislation in the province.

"Regina Public Library Project: David Mach," exhibition curated by Peter White, 1988.

Since the announcement by the RPL board on November 26, 2003, that three of nine library branches together with the Dunlop Art Gallery and the Prairie History Room would close, there has been much made of the fact that the provincial library legislation does not allow city council to direct the library board's actions. While it is true that city council cannot issue a direct order to the library board that they must follow on pain of dismissal, it is also true that library board members are left in no doubt as to council's wishes about financial matters. Their term of office is only two years, and every year the term of office of half of the civilan appointments expires and new board members can be appointed. In the last several years, new appointments have been made and there has been a shift in the political perspective of the board, just as there has been a shift in the political perspective of council. This point is certainly emphasized by the appointment, after the announcement of the library closures, of a former member of city council, Darlene Hincks, as a new civilian appointee to the library board. Ms Hincks, who resigned her seat on council to run as a Saskatchewan Party candidate and was defeated in the provincial election held in October 2003, served for several years on city council and can be expected to bring a "tow the line on taxes" attitude to the library board.

The Dunlop Art Gallery is a department of RPL. Its director is a member of the library's senior management team and reports to the library director. The Dunlop has its origins in the vision of Marjorie Dunlop, after whom the gallery was named in 1972, and who was chief librarian of RPL from 1948 to 1971. She understood that the world's information comes in many forms and that it is necessary to provide access to it in many forms as well. She brought music and art into the library, not just in the form of books — she exposed the people of Regina to the real thing by hanging paintings in the reading room and holding noon-hour concerts. When a new central branch of RPL was opened in 1962, it contained an actual art gallery, and on her retirement it was named in her honour. The Dunlop has gone on to develop a national reputation and has brought in significant funding from the Canada Council and the Saskatchewan Arts Board, both for mounting its many wonderful exhibitions and touring shows, and also for the acquisition of the art of Regina artists for its "permanent" collection. (The label "permanent" has become ironic in the current circumstances.) But the Dunlop has always been vulnerable to cuts for two reasons.

The first reason is that an art gallery in a library is perceived by some as both unusual and unnecessary. When many people think of libraries they think of books, so for a lot of people it seems odd for there to be a gallery devoted to visual art in a library. This, of course, is Marjorie Dunlop's innovative vision: that the mission of the public library is to provide access to the world's information in all its forms. She was ahead of her time in 1949, and she still is. Her idea has been copied by other libraries in Saskatchewan and across Canada. The second reason, however, is that the Dunlop is a discrete entity and that makes it easier to cut.

Cuts to RPL have been looming on the horizon for many years. Since at least the mid-1980s, city council has followed a policy of mill-rate increases that are at or below the rate of inflation. The rate of inflation has not been high, but over fifteen to twenty years even one or two percent less adds up to anywhere between fifteen and forty percent. In addition, the basket of goodies on the basis of which the CPI is calculated does not include books. These costs have risen at rates much higher than the rate of inflation. So even if mill-rate increases kept pace with increases in the CPI, this would still mean less money to buy books and other library materials. In addition, the waters have been muddied by property tax reassessment, which has taken place every three years since 1994 as property values have been brought up to fair market value levels, with the result that the impact of the mill-rate has been reallocated between old and new properties and between residential and commercial.

Reassessment is a provincial matter. In 1994 and in 1997 city council wanted a zero mill-rate increase so that any changes in property taxes paid by individuals could be laid at the province's

doorstep. About fifty percent of property taxes in Regina are paid to the two school boards, about forty-five percent goes to the city and five percent goes to the library. School boards are composed of elected representatives and they set their own mill-rates. The library board, as explained above, must get approval for its mill-rate from city council. However, in 1997 the library board had the temerity to ask the city council to approve a mill-rate increase. The proposed increase was very small — the price of one or two cups of coffee per month on the average assessment — but it was an increase nonetheless.

Members of city council were not pleased. The library board had requested an increase and had indicated that it would have to make deep cuts if the increase was not forthcoming. Council certainly had the legal authority to refuse the increase, but if they had refused, it would have been clear that the cuts to library services that would follow were necessary because of council's decision. Naturally, council would have preferred that the library board itself make the decision to cut so that it would not have to take the criticism.

The compromise that allowed council to save face on their "hold the line on taxes" agenda was to have the city auditor conduct a value for money audit of the library's operations to identify areas for costsavings. The auditor identified the library theatre (which has escaped the cuts this round), the Dunlop and the inner city branches as targets for cuts. Again, because these are discrete operations they are easy to target when cuts are on the table. Of course, the auditor's focus was on where and how to save money, not on the nature and scope of library service that the people of Regina wanted and needed. The library board moved to engage the people who would be affected by service cuts in the decisions that would ultimately be made. A discussion paper was prepared and distributed through the library to anyone who requested it. It identified all of the library's financial concerns, including the concerns relating to the capital costs of maintaining and repairing its aging buildings. Public meetings were held in every branch. What the people said was that nobody wanted to close anything and everyone was prepared to pay the cost. The library board decided against closure.

This time, the closures were announced with no public discussion. This is particularly galling because civic elections were held in October and no mention was made of any of these issues. The announced reasons for the closures are all things that have been known about for some time. The business tax was removed in the 1990s, the impact of a loss on assessment appeals has been a contingent liability since those cases began wending their way through the courts several years ago, and the shortfall in the employee pension plan is a temporary state of affairs, attributable to a downturn in the market that occurred a year or two ago and has since improved. None of the announced reasons were unknown prior to the municipal elections in 2003, and most of them were known prior to the municipal elections in 2000!

The reason for provincial legislation governing public libraries is to preserve some basic principles. The first and most important principle is that the people get to decide. Public libraries come from the bottom up, not from the top down. Members of the library board are stewards, not just of public monies, but also of public service.

The announced closures will reduce the number of branches by one-third and eliminate Regina art and culture.

They must consult with the public about their possible decisions, especially when they contemplate closures that will fundamentally alter the nature of the public library in Regina. The announced closures will reduce the number of branches by one-third and eliminate Regina art and culture. This decision eviscerates the library and rips the heart out of Regina.

Twenty-five or so years ago the community surrounding the Albert Branch library, a branch situated in the inner city, rallied to prevent the proposed closure of Albert. The library committee of the community association entered into an agreement with the library board about various matters relating to the running of Albert Branch. Perhaps the arts community can learn from that experience and, if anything can be retrieved from the current mess, enter into an agreement between a Dunlop Art Gallery Board and the library. Perhaps it is time to incorporate the Dunlop and enter into some sort of arrangement for space and people. These are just thoughts thrown out to inspire some brainstorming in a community that is, if nothing else (!), creative.

The Gift of Visual Art

by Sigrid Dahle

I was a gawky young girl the first time I ventured into what was then a new Regina Public Library building, a "modern" concrete and glass structure across the street from a leafy-green park that serves as an inviting centrepiece for downtown Regina. I vividly recall the thrill of scanning the child-high shelves in search of just the right book. I remember a tome with mysterious, luridly colored images of the solar system and another called "Mary Poppins" that featured spare black and white line drawings. I think I was eight years old.

Today, many decades later, the Dunlop Art Gallery and my work as an independent, Winnipeg-based curator regularly entice me back to one of my most memorable childhood haunts. Indeed, my exhibition, *To Conjure,*[1] opened at the Dunlop Art Gallery on November 14 — less than a month after Noreen Neu, the gallery's director, was suddenly dismissed "without cause" and just weeks before the RPL's director, Sandy Cameron, announced the gallery's demise.

As you might expect, the final stages of pre-exhibition preparation and installation proved to be a tense and challenging time both for me and for the Dunlop's remaining employees, one of whom, curator Donna Wawzonek, had only arrived September 16. But typical of my interactions with the Dunlop Art Gallery over the years, the entire staff rose to the occasion with a remarkable degree of professionalism and fortitude. At no time did the gallery waiver from fulfilling its primary responsibility — that of presenting its patrons with the most evocative, well-conceived exhibition possible. Moreover, as is also typical of the Dunlop, this was achieved by respecting and responding to (rather than exploiting or dismissing) the needs of both the artists and the curator involved in the project as well as the audience for whom the show was intended.

These latter characteristics have conspired to make the Dunlop an invaluable cultural institution, a veritable model for small public art galleries. And, though this legacy has everything to do with the dedicated, knowledgeable individuals who have worked at the Dunlop in a variety of capacities over the years (such as Joyce Clark, Vera Lemecha, Ingrid Jenkner, Anthony Kiendl, Helen Marzloff, John Reichert and Peter White, to name just a few), I would argue that it is also an effect of the Dunlop's unique structure and circumstances.

Because the Dunlop Art Gallery is a department of the Regina Public Library (rather than an incorporated, stand-alone institution), it is able to present a consistently intriguing and thoughtful program focused on contemporary art and ideas without putting undue demands on the community, especially local artists. Unlike your average artist-run centre or community-based gallery, as a library department the Dunlop is not compelled to rely on legions of (increasingly burnt-out) volunteers to serve on a board or committees. As compared with a typical community-based gallery (and some artist-run centres), it does not organize a plethora of fundraising events in which artists tend to be the primary donors — of artworks for auctions or ticket purchasers at raffles, for example. This is particularly significant in a small city like Regina in which the art community lacks "critical mass." Nor must the

Dunlop maintain a subscription membership base that must be constantly courted and administrated. In contrast to many public art galleries, gallery tours are not provided by trained volunteer "docents." Instead, artists and university art students are hired on a casual basis as gallery facilitators and paid a decent hourly wage. These facilitators serve simultaneously as gallery guards and as knowledgeable gallery guides who converse with visitors at any time the exhibition is open to the public — ten hours a day, seven days a week.

Which is to say that the Dunlop's point of contact with the general public, art patrons and the (local and national) art community has always been, first and foremost, through *the gift of visual art* in the form of exhibitions, national touring shows, award-winning publications, performances, lectures, symposia, hosting visiting artists, a critic in residence program, a superb art research centre, an art rental program and face-to-face conversation. Moreover, because the Dunlop staff are not overwhelmed with tasks incidental to informing "the practices and understanding of visual art"[2] (such as organizing volunteers or developing donor campaigns), they are able to attend to (art) project details in a timely and sensitive manner. They are also free to engage with exhibiting artists, visiting curators, residency program participants and the public in a courteous and generous manner.

Like many arts organizations, the Dunlop publishes a regular newsletter. What is notable about the Dunlop's smartly designed little booklet is that it consists almost entirely of brief, analytical (but accessible) descriptions of upcoming programs and new additions to the gallery's permanent art collection and research centre. Notably, there are no advertisements or pleas for cash for the latest capital campaign; there are no ritual lists of donors or pages devoted to membership renewal forms; neither will you see society-page photos documenting last month's fundraising extravaganza. This is not to disparage the majority of public institutions and artist-run centres whose very survival is dependent on just such strategies and the countless volunteers and donors whose tireless commitment ensures the viability of these institutions. It is rather to underscore the fact that financially stable art institutions (a virtually extinct twenty-first century entity) can direct their creative energy and resources solely to presenting art and nurturing the process of its production and reception.

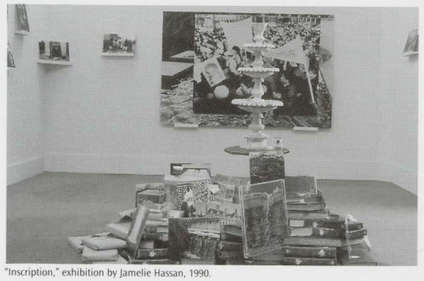
The Dunlop's exceptionally accessible downtown exhibition space (it also maintains another location at a suburban library branch) is also significant in this regard. The space is located just inside the library's main entrance and fronted by a glass wall. Consequently, it's the exhibition — rather than a gift shop or ticket-taker — that greets visitors when they arrive. And, in effect, because the glass wall makes the exhibition literally and immediately visible to library patrons as they stroll in or out of the library, the exhibition installations themselves (rather than a spate of promotional material or advertisements) are uniquely situated to arouse the curiosity of prospective patrons.

Which brings me to what I regard as the tragic irony of the Dunlop's fate; an irony that speaks loudly and poignantly of the conditions and larger historical forces within which contemporary cultural workers labour. The very circumstances that enable the Dunlop to provide an amenable, truly productive intellectual "holding environment" for the citizens of Regina, Saskatchewan and Canada are what makes it so vulnerable. For ultimately, the final decision regarding the Dunlop Art Gallery's future lies with a governing body — a board of directors and senior administrators — whose intellectual, practical and ethical disengagement from the gallery and the public it serves borders on the irresponsible. Their decision to summarily destroy this unique department of the library (without any public or staff consultation) indicates that these individuals have no vested intellectual or existential interest in the gifts the art gallery has consistently offered library visitors, or even a rudimentary understanding of what the art gallery has contributed to the cultural life of citizens whose values are not identical to their own. In that respect the Dunlop Art Gallery enjoys no more or less protection from the corporate ethos, financial desperation and consequent dissipation of focus and energy that have so insidiously undermined many of Canada's most accomplished cultural institutions.

Notes

1. *To Conjure* (November 14 to January 11, 2004); artists: Richard Dyck (Winnipeg), Stan Denniston (Toronto), William Eakin (Winnipeg), Jennifer Hamilton (Regina), Kim Morgan (Regina), Taras Polataiko (Saskatoon), Jeanne Randolph (Toronto), Lori Weidenhammer (Vancouver).

2. The Dunlop Art Gallery's mandate as summarized in its newsletter.

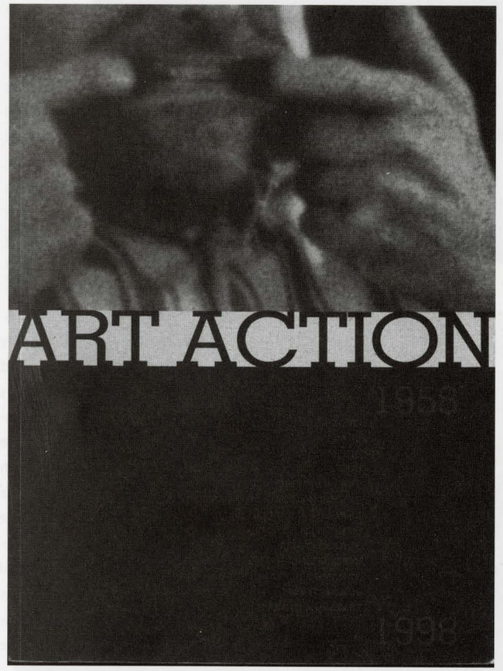


"Inscription," exhibition by Jamelie Hassan, 1990.

Art Action 1958 - 1998.

Richard Martel, ed. (Éditions Intervention, 1991)

review by Paul Couillard



Art Action: 1958 – 1998 is an expansive look at "action art," a term used to refer to a broad range of activities practiced under a variety of names, including performance art. Edited by Quebec's Richard Martel and with contributions by artists and curators from around the world, the book attempts to take stock of forty years of artistic activity. One stated aim of the book is to provide an antidote to the US bias of previous historical surveys that place a heavy emphasis on spectacular and narrative work. A second concern is to provide the perspective of practitioners and producers, rather than that of academics and critics. The book attempts, in essence, to write a different history of art activity than the one promulgated by established institutions. In his introductory essay, Martel writes:

> Action Art exists because there are artists who exist independently of conventional structures that are normalised for art. It is also proof of the existence of an art other than that of the restrictive order of the established milieu. (p. 60)

The book is divided into three sections, based on the structure of the 1998 colloquium in Quebec City where the material was first assembled. The first section deals with the period 1958–78. It features texts that look at particular styles, movements or groups based overwhelmingly in Europe or the United States, including happenings, Fluxus and Intermedia, Zaj (a performance collective from Spain), body art, action poetry and Viennese Actionism. The second section, covering 1978–98, is arranged geographically, with texts representing individual countries or regions. A third section includes an additional five countries not represented in the original colloquium. The book is multilingual, with all texts reproduced in English, French and, where applicable, the language in which they were first written.

Art Action contributes significantly to the available resource material on performance and related art forms. The book is packed with rare photos and contains extensive reference material on a wide group of artists. *Art Action* compiles a history that was until now unwritten, documenting a key area of artistic inquiry of

Yves Klein, *Anthropométries*, 1960, p. 74.

Grupo Proceso Pentagono, *Serpientes Y Petroleo*, 1991, p. 203.

the past century. The book makes a clear distinction between the sustained, often visually based, situational practices it represents and the occasional experimental forays by artists more firmly rooted in the performing arts traditions of theatre, dance and music. At the same time—appropriately enough for a form in which practitioners cannot even agree on a name for what they do—no one collective view predominates. Opposing ideas and strategies are given space to stake their individual claims. Taken as a whole, the book illuminates the motivations and actions that have constituted the practice of performance over the past forty years.

With texts from regions as diverse as Latin America, Thailand, Romania and Scandinavia, the book occasionally manages to shift the dialogue on performance beyond the familiar European and American art discourses. Felipe Ehrenberg's text, for example, ostensibly a look at performance art in Mexico, completely sidesteps the temptation to catalogue the work of recognized artists in favour of a consideration of various cultural practices and protest actions undertaken by the common citizenry of his region. Staking territory based on what is culturally specific rather than on what mimics or assimilates the official art canon, he writes:

> My advice is to jettison all that smells of prestige, for what seems so elegant more than often stagnates. We should by all means keep a close watch on what artists do in other places, but our looks should compare in order to gauge what is ours. (p. 180)

Victor Muñoz's "Notes on Action Art in Latin America" points out how unequal economic and colonial situations have influenced the character and direction of performance work in different Latin American countries. Similarly, Chumpon Apisuk's text on Thailand focuses on how political forces have restricted all experimental art practices in Thailand until quite recently. Detailing how a few specific initiatives have manifested in recent years takes precedence over considerations of individual artists or bodies of work; Apisuk describes a practice that is too newly identified to point to a defined aesthetic or formal structure. Far from being the product of a refined or esoteric aesthetic, performance art in this context is a primal gesture that tests basic freedoms, sometimes even claiming them for the first time. Gustav Uto describes a similar situation in Romania:

> [U]p until 1990 ... most of the events took place secretly, without public, in woods, cellars and private flats. The few publicly committed actions, which I know of, either ended with a scandal with subsequent pestering from the Ministry of the Interior (the "Securitate") or they were not considerable creations of performance work. The intimidation and external control, which inhibited the free expression of artists, degenerated after a while into a self-control, hammered into our heads. (p. 442)

Disparities of circumstance become clear when one compares these texts to those of western and central Europe, Australia or Canada, which tend to be more directly concerned with established art discourse. Most of the latter texts focus on the work of a relatively small number

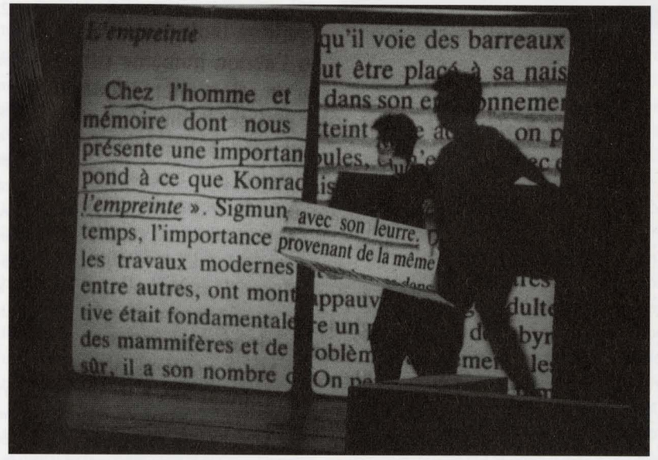
Grupo Proceso Pentagono, *Accion Callejera*, 1990, p. 203.

of artists, privileging specific practices or using individual artists as exemplary of particular tendencies and time periods.

Making sense of work in this way presents its own set of difficulties, producing a book that is by no means comprehensive. One significant gap is the lack of writing about recent US work, since the sole geographic representation is a relatively short text by Martha Wilson on Franklin Furnace's transformation from an exhibition space to a virtual production/web broadcast centre. Bruce Barber's text on Canada — Quebec is treated separately in a text by Alain-Martin Richard — identifies three modes of Canadian performance in the 1990s, focusing mainly on artists from the Atlantic provinces and Ontario. Barber rightly notes that his article cannot do justice to the diversity and profusion of work in Canada over the past decade; there are key regional and cultural gaps.

Readers seeking a tidy primer of performance art practices will be disappointed with this book. While the opening section provides relatively focused and conventional historical considerations of particular key practices, the decision to structure the period of 1978–98 by country tends to isolate rather than link parallel developments and concerns among artists of differing nationalities. Consequently, many ideas that run through *Art Action* are less developed than they could be, and the lack of an index does not help readers to discover these links for themselves. Perhaps the book's most serious shortcoming is the lack of attention paid to the significant body of recent performance work dealing with identity, race and cultural hybridity.

Nevertheless, the publication of *Art Action* is an important milestone. The book provides ample evidence of the significance of artists' performance, documenting work that has existed and thrived outside the institutional frame. The book details and is itself an example of how artists, often without financial resources or official sanction, have used their bodies and gestures to intervene in the dominant culture, providing fresh and urgent models for expression, creativity and transformation.



Suzanne Joly, *S.T.*, 1989, p. 329.

Ingrid Bachmann: Digital Crustaceans v.0.2: Homesteading on the Web

Gallery Articule, Montreal, Québec, 4 April – 4 May 2003.

review by J. R. Carpenter

Ingrid Bachmann, *Pookie Goes to Outerspace.* Courtesy: the artist.

Ingrid Bachmann can't sit still. Toiling for hours at keyboard and monitor is not her idea of a good time. Since becoming interested in internet-based arts in the early 1990s, Bachman has sought ways to bridge the physical/digital divide. To this end, Bachmann has enlisted the aid of a collaborator, Pookie the Hermit crab. In v.0.1 of *The Digital Crustaceans* project, Pookie — a biological, digital, quasi-fictional manifestation — explores a fascinating corner of the web at www.digitalhermit.ca, a site first created for "Science Fair," curated and organized by Lorraine Oades at Studio xx in Montreal in 2002.

And now, in the installation *Digital Crustaceans v.0.2: Homesteading on the Web,* Bachmann breaks the shackles of the monitor, employing multiple modes of representation to draw a relationship between the nomadic nature of the hermit crab and the cultural exercise of navigating the web. According to Bachmann, "this project views the Web as more than an address in cyberspace for the exchange of promotional information; it views the Web as a form of organic architecture to be worked in and on and across."

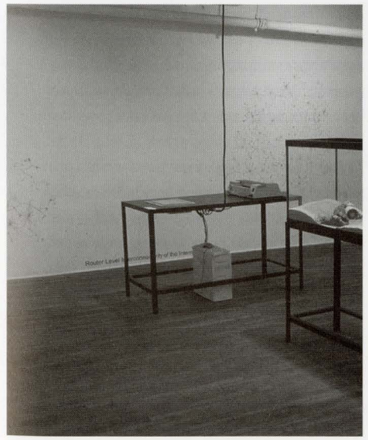
We usually think of a hermit as one who stays at home. Since the hermit crab carries its home on its back, home may be anywhere — why not on the internet? Indeed, Pookie leads a double life. Ensconced in a swank steel and glass tank, the real live Pookie's every move is charted by a ceiling mounted motion detector. Bachmann collaborated with ArtEngine, an Ottawa-based technology art collective; programmers Alexandre Castonguay and Mathieu Bouchard wrote the custom software that translates the motion capture of Pookie's wanderings to an ancient-sounding HP 7475A plotter. The record of this digital hermit's adventures, printed out over the course of the day, indicates that he does not travel far. He moves slowly, not having evolved much these past millions of years. Nonetheless, as a biological entity he directs technological impulses as deftly as a hand on a mouse; with the smallest organic movements, Pookie sets a global infrastructure into motion along the way. Pookie's movements are recorded on a specially created website that serves, metaphorically, as a virtual home for the hermit crab, mapping its itinerary as it journeys across the structures and sites of the World Wide Web.

In two large drawings on the gallery wall, the once mythic architecture of cyberspace is represented in a most tangible form: five feet tall and painted in orange and lime green, "Router level Interconnectivity of the Internet" looks like a giant, blood-shot eyeball. Larger still, a map of the world in heavy, painted lines: "Optical Fibre Submarine Systems Across the Globe," represents the subterranean cables that constitute part of the Internet's material base in rough, colored string. The antiquated backbone of the

Ingrid Bachmann, *Pookie Worries about the World.* Courtesy: the artist.

internet depicted evokes the fragility of infrastructure, a weakness we are kept blissfully unaware of in the high speed, eye-candy strip mall that is now the internet's public face. The instability of the internet remains a point of hope for Bachmann: only because it is such a porous and unstable medium might the internet continue to provide an alternative site for different points of view, continued easy access and hacker and shareware freedoms.

Bachmann presents a series of watercolors with fanciful titles depicting the life and times of Pookie. An archetypal figure for the twenty-first century, Pookie is the real star of the show. The titles of the drawings form a narrative of concern: "Pookie has an existential moment," "Pookie worries about the world" and "Pookie ponders the great religions of the world and finds them wanting." The state of the web is a vast subject; our task as humans is a difficult one — to grasp, ensure and maintain our place in this global technology. A wild depiction of "the hermit crab's cosmology" reminds us: all systems are precarious. In "Pookie in an unnatural habitat," Pookie the web crawler appears most uncomfortable lodged in a painting of vivid flowers. Perhaps, we are all becoming more at ease homesteading anonymously on the web. On the Internet no one knows you're a hermit crab.



Ingrid Bachmann, installation view. Courtesy: the artist.

Bachmann's exploration of the "earthly realities of digital technologies" also includes a hilarious series of digitally altered images of Pookie in outer space. In one image the intrepid Pookie, just visible through the glass visor of a space suit's helmet, is "The first hermit crab on the moon." In a collection of snapshots, "Pookie explores the telecommunication satellites that constitute the wireless network infrastructures of the internet." Through Pookie, Bachmann performs "the sleight-of-hand replacement of the concrete, objective world of life as it is lived with the subtle and ephemeral world of fiction"[1] with a quixotic humor and charm rare to the internet these days.

The arcane and mysterious language of biology used in Bachmann's watercolor titles define the common hermit crab: Phylum: Arthopoda; Sub-Phylum: Crustacea; Order: Decapdoa; and so on. These distinguishing characteristics contrast nicely with the oblique language of internet technology in which we are so well versed today. The minutia that comprise the human-interest story of Pookie the natural-history specimen or Pookie the space-crab may or may not be more real to us, more easily grasped than the still murky backbone of the internet. Does the average human know what a router is, or are they more likely to know what hermit crabs eat?

As the version release numbers indicate, *Digital Crustaceans v.0.2* is by no means finished. A forward-looking project, it ponders big questions: if the web is democracy — what kind of democracy will it become? It poses digital questions in biological terms. As the motion detector and I stare the slow-moving, unflappable Pookie down, I think about how quickly humans evolve. Whether it's good for us or not, we tend to run wildly off into all aspects of readily accessible but at times barely assessable culture. The principles of homesteading are slower, more deliberate. Could the hermit crab be our emissary as he ventures out gamely — an innocent, a scavenger, a real-estate guru — on the wild frontier of the web?

Notes:

1 Mario Vargas Llosa, *Letters to a Young Novelist* (New York: Picador, 1997, p.7).

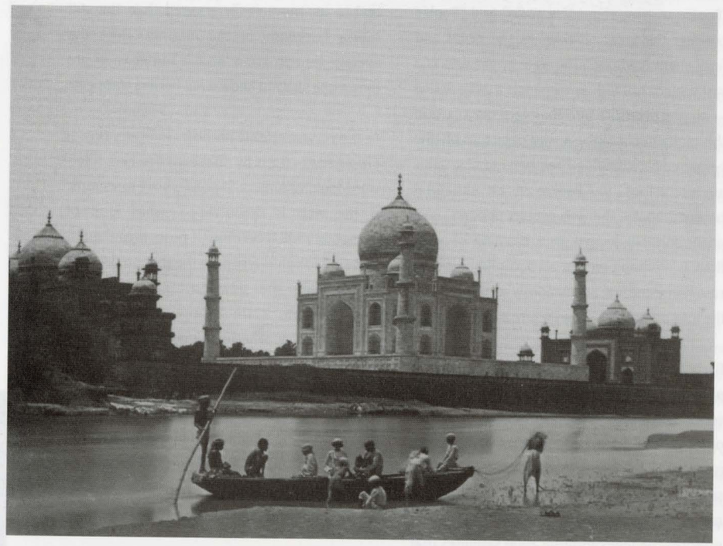
Traces of India: photography, architecture and the Politics of Representation

Canadian Centre for Architecture, Summer 2003
Yale Center for British Art, Until January 11, 2004

review by Rahat Kurd

The cultural ownership implicit in British protection of Indian monuments transformed India into a kind of museum where ruins were left intact, on site, while reproductions (photographs, drawings, plaster casts) were sent off to imperial repositories. These photographs contributed to the 'museumizing imagination,' a Western habit of mind that assigned colonized countries a sense of tradition while controlling their cultural heritage.

— curatorial text from the Traces of India exhibit at the Canadian Centre for Architecture



Felice Beato, *The Taj Mahal from across the Yamuna River, Agra,* 1858/59. Image. CCA Collection.

On an old British newsreel from 1954, scenes of Red Fort in Delhi — the battlements, the vast grounds where huge crowds are gathered, and where Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru tours military ranks on parade — are accompanied by a sombre male narrator's voice explaining that the day is August 15, National Independence Day in a country that has been free of colonial rule for seven years, and that "for the people of India, the celebration is naturally one of the most important in the calendar."

The film loop was shown on a small monitor in a room where the rest of the images on display were still photographs spanning the era of British rule in India. As I walked around the room taking in visual evidence that for over a century, Red Fort had been the centre of power for the military forces of the British Raj — indeed, that corporal punishments against treasonous Indian soldiers had been carried out by English colonels on the same parade ground — the voice on the newsreel was heard over and over again. With each photo I looked at, his neutral words seemed to acquire progressively darker tones of irony, even bitterness, as if it were the voice of the ousted Raj itself, looking back and lamenting what it had lost: "For the people of *India,* the celebration is *naturally* one of the most *important* in the calendar."

That *naturally* must give every good critical conscience pause; nationalist fervor being the result, we know, of the coldest and most rational calculations. When colonial pride in the Red Fort is replaced by a newly independent, nationalist attachment to the same symbol of power, how do images of that site change? How do political contexts shape the way such images are made? What are the meanings they evoke for their intended audience?

At the Canadian Centre for Architecture, these questions arise from the museum's own very large collection of nineteenth– and early twentieth–century photographs of India's historic monuments, temples and shrines, photographed or drawn by historians, archaeologists, surveyors and professional or amateur photographers, first in the days of the East India Company, and then as part of the continuing colonial project called the British Raj. Post-Independence material in the exhibit includes clips of Bollywood films, post cards and religious calendars, all of which feature the same monuments presented in a new context, largely intended for a domestic Indian audience.

The *Traces of India* exhibit argues that in the colonial context the act of photographing or commissioning drawings of a historic monument is itself a way of taking possession of the site, a colonial annexation that reshapes the site's function and meaning. Photos of the Qutb Minar or temples in Orissa taken by a commissioned group of British photographers in the late nineteenth–century, for example, have a formal grandeur achieved by the centrality of the structure and the absence of human activity or movement. The resulting image constitutes an exclusively British claim of discovery rather than the modest accomplishment of merely documenting a site whose historical and cultural significance, whether a matter of established consensus or ongoing debate, would have been determined by Indians. Whether intended for the general British public or an elite archaeological society, these images glossed over the complexities of the plural Indian religious and social context, and instead allowed for a simpler narrative that could serve the British colonial project.

The aesthetic formality of these images, furthermore, strengthens the notion of colonial discovery as an orderly process, a secular science; a selfless and noble "duty" expected of those who rule: "It is our duty to dig and discover; to classify, reproduce, and describe; to copy and decipher; and to cherish and conserve." When Lord Curzon, Viceroy of India, spoke these words in 1906, India had been firmly held by the British Crown for almost fifty years; perhaps it was easier to speak of order and method by then.

Unlike the formal archaeological surveyors' photos, the earlier works of Felice Beato served a more transparently political purpose. Arriving in India in the aftermath of the rebellion of 1857, Beato deemed it eminently good for

Felice Beato, *Captain Hodson's Horse Regiment with Sikh cavalrymen, Lt. H.C. Meecham and Assistant Surgeon Anderson, Lucknow,* 1858.
Image. CCA Collection.

British morale to scatter the dug-up bones of mutinous Indian soldiers in front of the Lucknow Palace (where they had been killed months earlier) in order to photograph it. The Beato photograph showing Sikh cavalrymen with their English regiment, Hodson's Horse, is likewise a proud affirmation of the British soldier's ability to lead and maintain Indian loyalties in that conflict. By the turn of the century, the rebellion may have been sufficiently past for the bloody business of subjugating and ruling over a subcontinent to have acquired the genteel gloss of a scholarly pursuit.

It is not possible to do justice here to the full erudite scope of *Traces of India*. Whereas museums have made claims about the immutability of colonized cultures in the past, this exhibit carefully illuminates, by juxtaposing images depicting colonial power at its height with others that depict its aftermath, why such claims are no longer tenable. A large part of the exhibit also focuses on the Great Exhibition at the Crystal Palace in London, 1851, which brought Indian arts, crafts and architectural design reproductions to a British public for the first time. In showing us how the exhibition evoked the sense and scale of British domination of foreign lands and affirmed to its audience the British capacity for finding and possessing all that it found to be good and beautiful in them, *Traces of India* brings the "museumizing imagination" itself under scrutiny.

An additional conclusion can be drawn from the exhibit's display of contemporary film clips and other popular media images: the museum is no longer the public's primary gateway to India. But if the imaginations of the past required a formal, timeless object to dream upon, does the pop culture-consuming imagination of the present really seek anything new? When imperial power passed from the East India Company to the British Crown in 1858, the princely states of India — ruled by monarchs, outside British jurisdiction — were considered *theatrical states*, the locus of exotic, unchanging India, or "stages on which British colonial fantasy played itself out."[1] More recently, films such as *Monsoon Wedding*, *Hollywood/Bollywood* and *Bend It Like Beckham* have won global success by portraying Indian culture — whether in Delhi, Toronto or London — as a uniformly happy throng of dancing Punjabis in shiny, colorful clothes. While it is Indian filmmakers who now, in a global marketplace, seek to sell the idea of India as perpetual theatre, the demands of their audiences have not significantly changed.

It is difficult to fault *Traces of India* for its near silence on the current very grave crisis of Indian nationalism. The destruction of the Babri Mosque in Ayodhya in 1992 and the massacre of Muslims in Gujrat in 2002 (where places of worship were also destroyed or replaced with Hindu icons), could well be argued to have been outside the purview of this exhibit, which does not venture beyond 1950s-era images of Nehru waving from a "sacralized" Red Fort and more recent film clips of joyous patriots singing "I Love My India" while sailing past the Taj Mahal on a slow boat up the Yamuna River. Yet there is no more richly nuanced and appropriate context for probing the sharp rise of Indian militarism and religious fascism over the past decade. It is curator Maria Pelizzari who points out: "The shift from the British notion of power as secular to the Indian vision of power as sacred is a key issue in the reading of these popular texts,"[2] while in his essay "The Sacred Circulation of National Images," Partha Chatterjee writes,

> To enter the sacred domain of "our" national treasures, the object must be recovered for "our" worshipful gaze. I suggest that this recovery is effectively accomplished by the iconic image of the monument.[3]

These arguments by the curators of *Traces of India* allow us to see an event such as the destruction of the Babri Mosque as an attempt by Hindu nationalists to strip India of its pluralist complexities, "recovering" in the process a form of "sacred" homogeneity, in ways that recall the earlier British colonial project of constructing its mythological past. But the human fears and desires attached to images and narratives of historic monuments in India have never been as explosive as they are now.

Notes

1 Nicholas B. Dirks, "Colonial Amnesia and the Old Regime in the Photographs of Linnaeus Tripe," in Maria A. Pelizzari, ed., *Traces of India: Photography, Architecture and the Politics of Representation, 1850 – 1900.* (Montreal: Canadian Centre for Architecture, 2003), pp. 206-207, 211. Dirks applies Clifford Geertz's term "theatre state" to his discussion of Pudukkottai, a kingdom in the Tamil region presided over by a maharaja but indirectly controlled by the British: "Princely India was to preserve the old, provide playgrounds for the British in India, [...] and protect the idea of imperial expansion by symbolizing British liberality and creating a dependent native elite at the same time" (p. 206).

2 Maria A. Pelizzari, "From Stone to Paper: Photographs of Architecture and the Traces of History," *(Traces of India)*, 45.

3 Partha Chatterjee, "The Sacred Circulation of National Images," *(Traces of India)*, 284.

Long Live Pussyboy !!

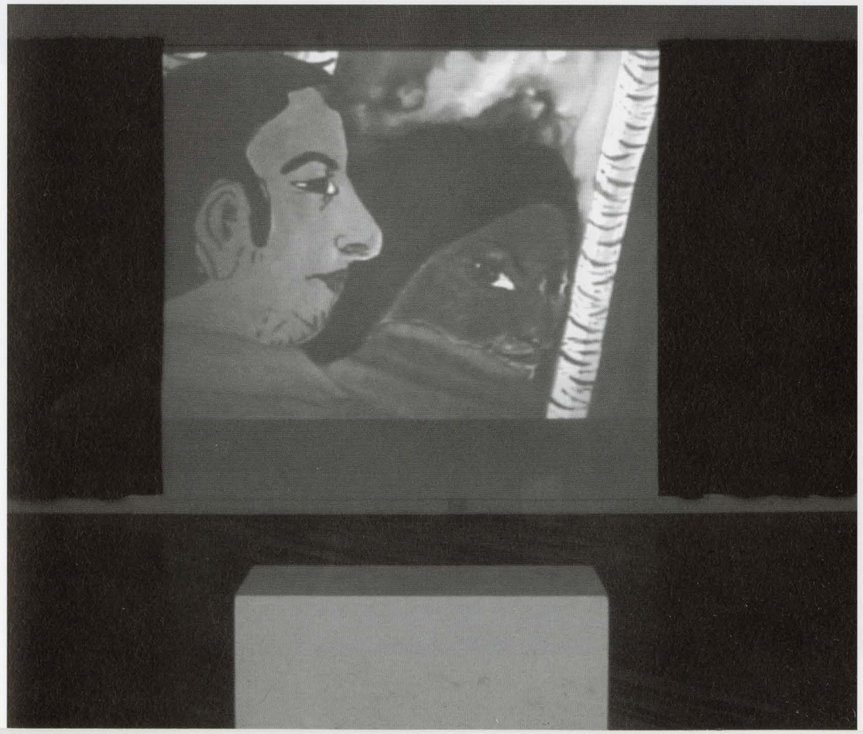
Trans Mission — Get Your Motor Runnin': Works by Alec Butler
A Space Gallery, 1 November – 6 December 2003

review by J. Bobby Noble

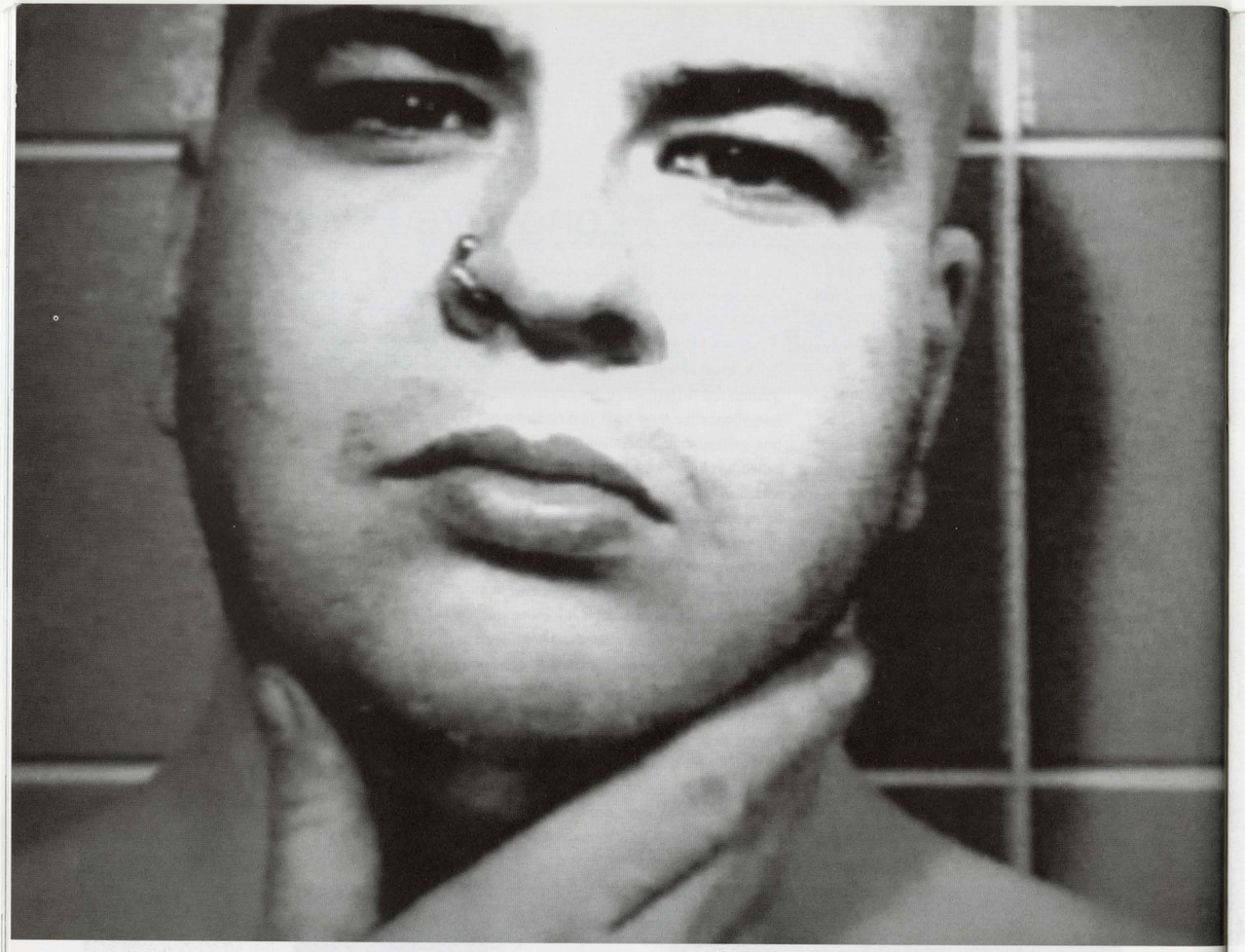
If I had to describe in a few words the works by Alec Butler on display in *Trans Mission — Get Your Motor Runnin',* I'd have to say, "Queer as Fuck!"

Playwright, experimental filmmaker, transsexual artist/activist, Butler's identity — no, identities — functions as both the content and the frame of these complicated and gritty works. Butler's art exists in the liminal spaces between categories: butch, dyke, female-to-male transsexual man, lesbian, drag king, queer pussyboy. These spaces, and the work it takes for heteronormativity to render them unthinkable, become the props of Butler's important cultural work.

Butler produces work that documents the process of escaping fixity in the sex/gender taxonomy, whose discursive foundations condition intelligibility. His A Space exhibition included two recent short videos entitled *Sick* and *First Period,* the second and third installments in a trilogy of short animated videos called *The Misadventures of Pussyboy.* The Pussyboy trilogy pays homage to those painful teenage years of growing up differently gendered. For transsexual and transgender youth, this means coming to terms with a body that can only, eventually, betray one's sense of self. The final two installments — *Sick* and the most recent, *First Period* — deal with Alec/Pussyboy/"Alick" as he survives his high-school years. Fitting in



Alec Butler, installation view.
Courtesy: A Space. Photo: P McCallum.



Alec Butler, video still. Courtesy: A Space. Photo: P McCallum.

neither with the "rockers" (beer-drinking boys) nor the "stoners" (tough, pot-smoking girls), Alec resides in the no man's land he shares with the young woman who eventually makes him the very queer man he becomes: a Métis woman known only as K.

While it's true that the character Alec/Pussyboy/Alick is the hero of *Pussyboy,* the real hero — dare I say heroine — of the piece is K. That K has survived a racist and hostile environment as a teenager of colour is just as remarkable, if not more, than Alec's survival of that same environment. As a First Nations Métis woman whose identity is, by definition, equally although differently liminal, K's existence shares much with Alec's. While both are ostracized — Alec for his gender and K for her race — the space they inhabit in no (white) man's land is one marked by the queerest of desires. In each installment of the Pussyboy trilogy, K saves the day. *The Misadventures of Pussyboy* pays homage to the necessity of resignification and decontextualization as queer and trans survival strategies. Where transphobic and homophobic teenagers taunted Alec with shouts of "sick," "freak" and the threat of more beatings, K turns abuse and violence into erotic props. The insult "you're sick" becomes "Yes, you're my sickboy" and "sick — hmmm, yes — you and me both." K's existence as a Métis woman and her desires for female masculinity are equally unpalatable in the world in which they live.

But it is also through K's exhalations of pleasure that Alec — "Ah-Lick" — comes into being. It is her fierce erotic love, as a young sexual top, for the teenage Pussyboy that nurtures him, and it is through K that Alec finds pleasure — indeed, finds an erotic home — in a very queer body. In *First Period,* the onset of menstruation is a mark of K's erotic possession of Alec's body and desires. After discovering blood on her hands, K says "Don't tell me that this is Pussyboy's first period," about which Alec later comments, "It wasn't. But I couldn't tell her that." Gender roles are reversed here; where queer femme-ininity is often obscenely misunderstood as a lack of sexual agency, especially in a scene about losing one's virginity, but in this queerly engendered memory it is virginal and bottomed masculinity that bleeds upon penetration. Blood, then, is a sign of K's agency and her power as a sexual top. To mark this entrance into a new subjectivity, the Alec of the trilogy is re-corporealized in a body that, up to this point, only betrayed him by rendering him unintelligible. In a clever pun, Alec's newly adopted stray cat purrs around K and Alec, an ironic detail that does not go unnoticed to K, who says, "Look, your pussy's come home. Now you're Ah-Lick."

The other works presented in the show — *Ruff Paradise* and *Hardcore Memories* — similarly resignify artifacts of a painful but queerly pleasurable youth. An altar made up of objects from his adolescence — a kid's bicycle-tire medicine wheel; rocks, which mark hardness as a survival tool for both Alec and K; a studded black leather bracelet; hair clippers — bears witness to the courage it takes for queer, trans and youth of colour to survive in a world that cannot stomach their queer selves and fiercely political desires. My favorite part of the exhibit, however, was the desk displaying a counter-cultural canon for young tormented trans men and women. Here's your queer recipe for survival: *Beautiful Losers, A Street Car Named Desire, Therese and Isabelle, On the Road, Diary of Anne Frank, Dracula.*

Top: Alec Butler, installation view. Courtesy: A Space. Photo: P McCallum.
Bottom: Alec Butler, video still. Courtesy: A Space. Photo: P McCallum.

Setting the Table:
Collective bargaining for the visual arts

by Carole Condé

On November 30, 1987, the Independent Artists Union (IAU) sat down to negotiate with the Ontario Arts Council (OAC). The IAU was organized in the early 1980s around the idea of a living wage for visual artists. The discussions with the council were to explore ideas about how this might be achieved. Following the example of artist-income programs in the Netherlands, the IAU argued that individual arts grants could be replaced by some form of annual income. But the talks with the OAC didn't go past the first meeting and soon after the IAU began to slowly fade away. A few diehard members, however, still manage get together for the annual Labour Day march in Toronto.

At its height, the IAU had around 700 members spread across Ontario. It was a challenge to Canadian Artists Representation (CARFAC) at that time, which was seen as more conservative in its approach to artists' issues. CARFAC had gone through its own internal debates. At one point members of CARFAC had proposed things like a "closed shop"[1] and other concepts traditionally used by labor unions. Despite their differences, the two organizations tolerated each other, and at certain points even cooperated.

Aside from raising consciousness around the concept of a living income and the idea that art is a public service as opposed to being exclusively a commodity, one lasting contribution the IAU made was the role it played in the early discussions around the federal status of the artist legislation.

On December 1, 2003, CARFAC and Le Regroupement des artistes en arts visuels du Québec (RAAV)[2] opened negotiations with the National Gallery of Canada. It's a historic first, not only in Canada, but probably in the world. Artists can now legally negotiate a collective agreement with federal public art institutions.[3]

Sixteen years passed between that strange meeting with the OAC and the opening of negotiations with the National Gallery. The difference this time was in the legal position of artists, at least federally. When the IAU met with the OAC it was a "voluntary" meeting. The OAC was polite but patronizing. From their point of view, they were simply indulging some new form of creative angst. Today, on the federal level, artists have the right to collective bargaining. Unfortunately, the situation hasn't changed on the provincial level.[4]

Negotiations with the National Gallery have just started and it's hard to say where they will go; this is new ground. However, one concept that now informs the discussions is the idea of a living income. Is it possible to raise fees to levels where they are more than just a token payment and begin to approach something like a living income? This not only involves the levels of fees paid but also the ability of artists to collect what they are owed. While negotiations with the National Gallery only affect that institution, the levels and payment of fees will be part of a much larger campaign. The outcome of talks with the gallery, however, will set an important precedent. Twelve years ago, CARFAC calculated that the sum total of artists fees that should be paid by public institutions across Canada was around eight million dollars a year. And that was twelve years ago, before the digital "revolution." At the time, only a fraction of that was actually paid out. Many institutions cut or reduce artists fees in order to expand or maintain other services. Most institutions will still claim that public exposure is more valuable than fees to artists.

One impetus behind opening talks with the National Gallery is the issue of payment for the reproduction of art works on their website and on sites they are affiliated with. At present, the gallery asks artists to relinquish their fees in this area.

Although negotiations don't directly deal with the issue of "service" versus "commodity," it is through the process of raising and securing fees that artists may achieve a living income outside the open marketplace. The market then would become either an income supplement (rather than the other way around) or a financial means by which artists can expand and develop their art work. It would also encourage forms of work that exist, by their very nature, outside the market. And, as the IAU used to argue, a living income would not only allow artists to do their art work but to pay the rent as well, thus opening up jobs to other qualified folk that they now occupy in order to survive.

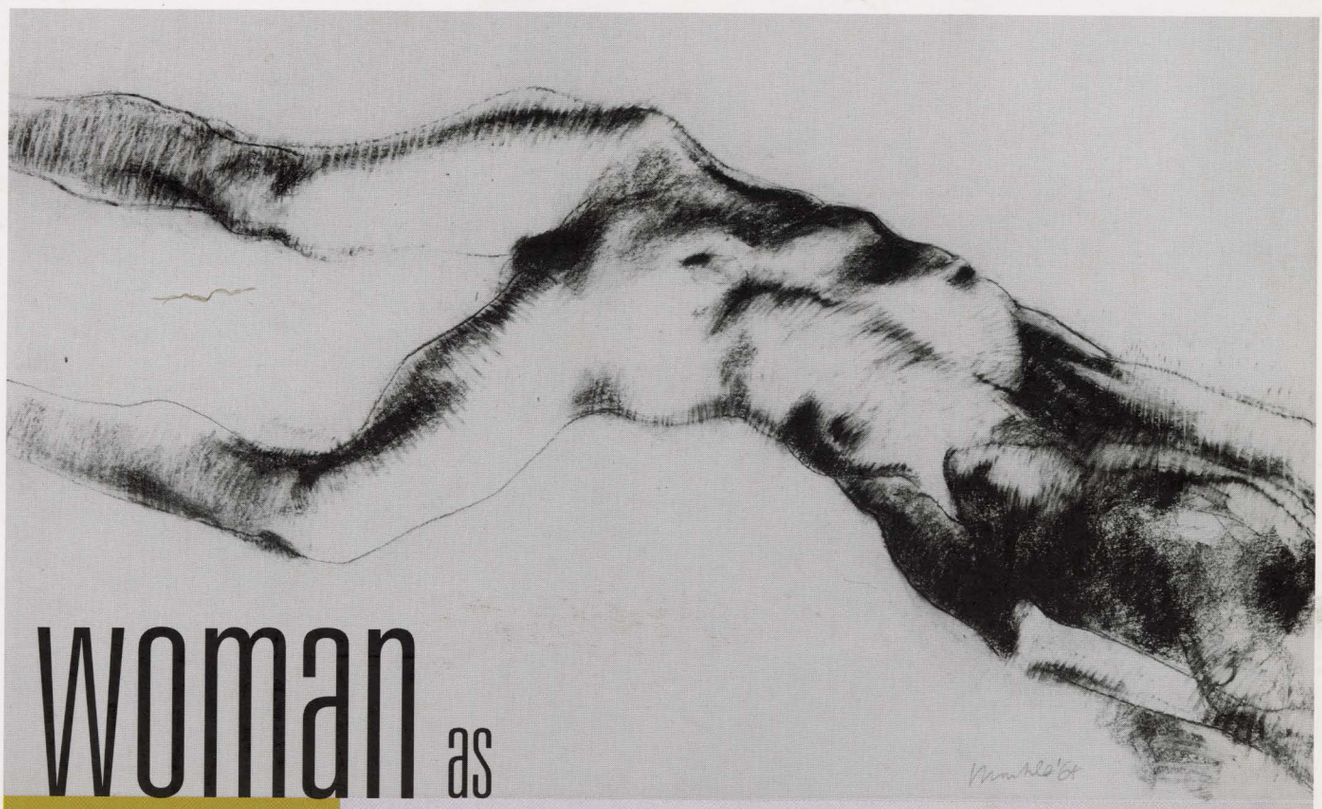
Notes

1 "Closed shop," in this context means that you would only be able to exhibit in a public gallery if you were a member of CARFAC. This would force artists to join if they were to have a public exhibition.

2 RAAV represents artists in the province of Quebec. CARFAC represents artists from the rest of Canada.

3 Under the federal Status of the Artist Act, CARFAC and RAAV can negotiate what is called a "scale agreement." For visual artists this would be the CARFAC fee schedule and related economic matters. What can't be bargained is the sale price of art works, although the public use of such work can be.

4 While Quebec has status of the artist legislation, only performing artists have the right to collective bargaining. Saskatchewan is in the process of enacting legislation while the remaining provinces have none. With a new government in Ontario, there are moves to get status legislation on its agenda.



woman as goddess

Liberated Nudes by Robert Markle and Joyce Wieland

November 29, 2003 – February 29, 2004

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Robert Markle (Canadian, 1936–1990), *Falling Figure Series: Marlene III* , 1964. Charcoal on paper, 58.4 x 88.9 cm. Anonymous gift in honour of J.W.G. Macdonald, 1965. Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. © 2003 Estate of Robert Markle.
Joyce Wieland (Canadian, 1930–1998), *Untitled [lovers joined]*, between 1954 and 1958. Pen and ink on paper, 21.5 x 28.0 cm. Gift of Betty Ramsaur Ferguson, Puslinch, Ontario, 1998. Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. © 2003 National Gallery of Canada, Gift of the Estate of Joyce Wieland