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ART MEDIA POLITICS



FUSE

MAGAZINE

Engaging Communities

with Goll & Nielsen, Cheryl L'Hirondelle, Candice Hopkins, Janna Graham and Kim Simon



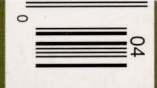
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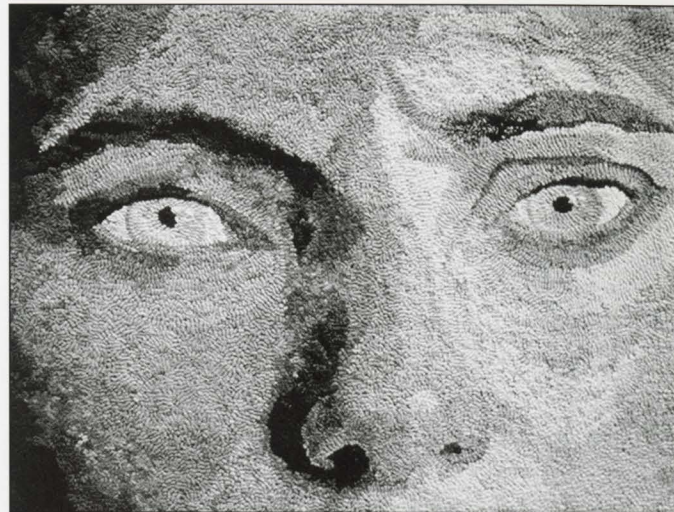
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a little someday hopeful
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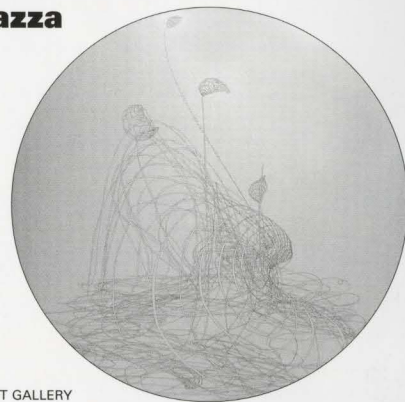
Bev Pike
The Hysteria Chronicles

Recent Acquisitions
Lucy Pullen: Double Meandering Line Drawings

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Suzanne Funnell
step lift pivot all of your enemies will die (cont'd)

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Alltagszeit
(In Ordinary Time)
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INIGO MANGLANO-OVALLE, ALLTAGSZEIT, 2001.
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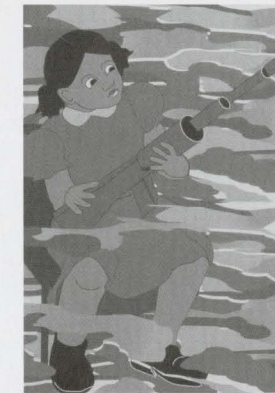


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January 6 - 29
See Girl
Diyan Achjadi

February 3 - 25
Braided Narratives
Joscelyn Gardner

March 3 - 26
Lamps for the Limbo-Stretch
Walter Jule

Image: Diyan Achjadi, See Girl Sit
Digital Output on fabric, 2003

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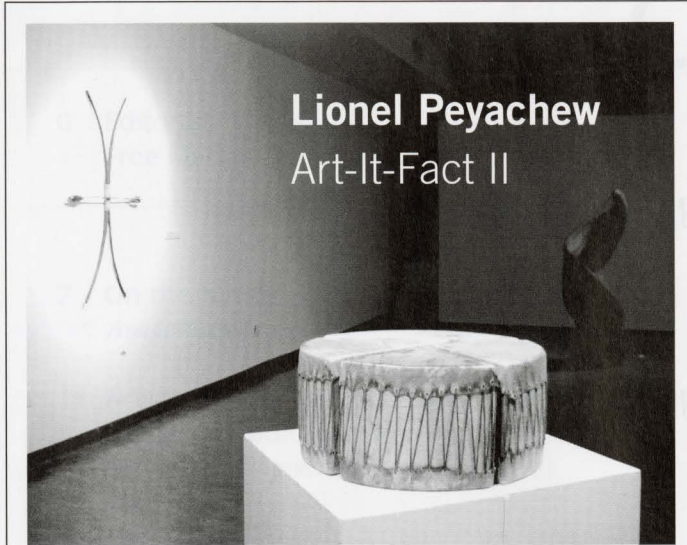
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Midwest Arts Council • Hamiota MB • September 9 - 28, 2004
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Dauphin Allied Arts • Dauphin MB • February, 2005
Portage Arts Centre • Portage la Prairie MB • April 7-28, 2005
Carberry Plains Arts Council • Carberry MB • June 7-30, 2005

This exhibition was generously supported by The Whitehead Foundation of Southwestern Manitoba and Urban Shaman Gallery. The Art Gallery of Southwestern Manitoba gratefully acknowledges the support of the City of Brandon, Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Tourism, The Manitoba Arts Council, The Canada Council for the Arts, Arts Stabilization Manitoba and Canadian Heritage.

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KELLY MARK, FROM THE 17 APOSTLES, DURALEX PRINTS, 2002, AND LOUIS JONCAS, DETRITUS, C-PRINT, 2000

[image: Greg Staats, *witness*, 2003; C-print mounted on anodized aluminum, 60 x 88 cm]

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Canada Council for the Arts / Conseil des Arts du Canada

Canada



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Short Fuse Artist Project

Free Market Fundamentalism and the Search for Capitalist Utopia

The complexity of a situation can never be addressed through ideology alone, though, as we witnessed in the us on November 2, ideology went a long way to conflate American foreign policy, morality and national security with democracy. The most expensive election in history (3.9 billion dollars) bought a second victory for George W. Bush and on the morning of November 3 Americans talked about expatriation (perhaps it is better to be stateless) and Canadians offered them the option of marriage.

On the eve of the election, *cbc's Ideas* broadcast a lecture by Naomi Klein where she described the American invasion and occupation of Iraq as driven by "faith-based free market fundamentalism." Faith-based, here, refers not to an allegiance to a Christian God but to a different brand of zealotry — laissez-faire economics and utopian capitalism.

In her lecture, Klein suggested that both the war in Iraq and the ideological shift in America's political paradigm were propelled by those neo-conservatives eager to experiment, in the face of world opposition, with busting open the borders of formerly closed economies, selling off national industries to the highest bidder and predicting that the trickle down effect will take care of everything else. Free the market and the rest will follow.

We here at Fuse are baffled and deeply disturbed by the results of the us election. We expect the next four years will demonstrate major changes in the way democracy is practiced in the West. If there is any hope to be salvaged from election results it is that the world has become more polarized, and liberalism — the kind of passive fence sitting that we are especially prone to in Canada — will lose its position as a viable political option.

Connecting the articles in this issue is writers' and artists' desire to get at the complexities of our situation, to find the spaces in between those that have been institutionally sanctioned and launch them into the public domain.

In "Sounding the Border," Cheryl L'Hirondelle and Candice Hopkins discuss how they work with community members to stage performance activities such as audio and video workshops, pirate radio broadcasts and ongoing conversations about the relationship between the reserve, the arts and the broader community to investigate ideas of place and community from aboriginal perspectives.

Janna Graham and Kim Simon interview Goll & Nielson in "Raising the Platform." The collaborative uses the context of art to interrogate issues ranging from nationalist rhetoric in the Danish government and gentrification in New York City to neo-liberal economics in Europe. This collaboration explores the underlying complexities, complications and consequences of these issues and constructs a forum for public discussion, encounter, exhibition and participation.

Leah Lakshmi Piepznsa-Samarasinha documents the challenges and triumphs of Desh Pardesh as well as its legacy to South Asian arts and activism in "Artists, Rebels, Warriors," while Amish Morrell, in "On the Misrecognition of Images," considers the role of the image in relation to war — looking specifically at how visual practices can open up strategies for reading and subsequently provide different views of history, gesturing toward almost invisible practices and alternate inscriptions of resistance.

In their assault on Iraq, Bush and his advisors failed to estimate the reality of Free Market fanaticism — that is, the reactions of the Iraqi people, the American people and the rest of the world. It was bad planning to assume that Iraq would thankfully give up its sovereignty and allow the us to sell the country off to the highest bidder. The work to be done now, as we settle into another four-year term, is to create and document the symbols and complexities of resistance.

On the home front, the first response of the Canada Council to its most recent deadline for consultations regarding changes to the Visual Arts funding program is telling indeed. In an email letter signed by François Lachapelle and sent on the day before the deadline for public remarks, we are told that "The [Canada Council for the Arts] has lost its capacity to be generous and is therefore less able to support the 'development of practice,' the purpose of the current program as stated 40 years ago." For the entire text of the letter, see our website.

On the Misrecognition of Images

by Amish Morrell

In Barbara Hammer's latest film, *Resisting Paradise*, screened at the Images Festival in Toronto this past April, there is a photograph of people ascending a steep valley. Framed by the surrounding mountains, I almost read this image as being of a group of hikers on a weekend outing in the Alps or the Pyrennes. In *Remembrance of Things to Come*, a film by Chris Marker and Yannik Bellon that was recently screened at Cinematheque Ontario, the viewer is shown photographs taken by Denise Bellon, most of which are from Paris and the French countryside between the first and second world wars. The images are of recreational parachutists, café life in Paris, people swimming, a woman stretched out naked by a river. Both films capture what seem on the surface to be idyllic times, yet gesture toward complex ways of thinking about the role of the image in relation to war.

Unlike the recent photographs of us soldiers torturing prisoners at the Abu Ghraib prison, the images in *Resisting Paradise* and *Remembrance of Things to Come* are unfamiliar as either records of, or responses to, violence. On April 28, when the Abu Ghraib images first appeared on the *cbs* program *Sixty Minutes II* they provoked a flurry of responses.¹ Susan Sontag wrote an essay that appeared in *The New York Times Magazine*, in which she describes the ways the photographs were taken up by callers to Rush Limbaugh's radio talkshow. Callers analogized them to fraternity rituals, making this comparison

not to de-emphasize their horror but to redeem them as representative of "normal" behavior.² Sontag, having written one of the definitive books on photography as a modern social practice, asks what it means for us to perform for the camera, what it means for us that some stage these obscene tableaux. She writes that "to live is to be photographed, to have a record of one's life, and therefore to go on with life oblivious, or claiming to be oblivious, to the camera's nonstop attentions. But to live is also to pose. To act is to share in the community of actions recorded as images." The act of looking affirms the self that is conceived in the photograph, the self who took the photograph and the self who looks at it, all produced through the dynamics of imaging. In describing the images from Abu Ghraib as recording a community of actions, Sontag analogizes them to photographs of lynching in the American South, circulated by white southerners as postcards much as the images of Abu Ghraib were used by soldiers as screen savers and circulated to others via email. College hazing rituals, torture and lynching all affirm a social order and here, their photographic record can function as either souvenir or evidence.

Sontag also compares the images to pornography, both because they replicate familiar tropes of erotic display and because they were circulated in much the same way ordinary people sometimes post images on the internet of themselves emulating pornographic poses.³ Her argument, succinctly stated on the cover of the magazine, is that "the photographs are us." This relationship, however, is not



Barbara Hammer, *WWII Refugees Fleeing Through Switzerland*, still from *Resisting Paradise*, 2003.

necessarily a mimetic one. Depending on how these images are framed or the context in which they appear, the viewer might experience voyeuristic pleasure, participate in perverse moralism such as that used by the soldiers to legitimate their actions or be invoked to judgment.

When looking at photographs it is difficult to affectively bracket their strictly referential qualities from how they operate as part of a system that extends beyond their physical frame. Through their semiotic play, images mediate material relations. They shape a social imaginary, inciting responses to the events they portray as well as guiding the workings of military and industrial infrastructure. The role of images as part of institutionally managed structures of violence was a central theme in the programming at this year's Images Festival in Toronto, as was the problem of how image can be employed to counter a sense of the inevitability of war.

Harun Farocki's *War at a Distance* describes the workings of images as part of military and industrial processes with robotic monotony. Farocki carefully illustrates how images guide missiles to their target or enable robot welders to recognize seams to be welded on an automotive assembly line. The film begins with screen images from the Gulf War transmitted from cameras installed in the heads of missiles. The camera reduces the landscape to shapes and curves, discerning only the edges of fields, roads, powerlines and bridges, as if sent from a security camera roving the sky. The ground comes closer, the picture disappears and the screen turns to snow. The idea of images enabling the viewer to extend their power of sight while remaining at a distance is concretized by this operation. Here, the act of seeing is synonymous with destruction. Like the news reports of the

Gulf War, these images do not show civilian casualties. To not be seen is, tragically, to not exist.

If Farocki explains how images are part of the physical mechanisms of war, in his lecture at the Images Festival titled *War Games: Digital Gaming and the us Military*, Ed Halter illustrates the interwoven relationships between Hollywood cinema, video gaming and the us military. Commercial video games available in the early 1990s such as *Doom* proved easily adaptable to military training and provided an environment that was familiar to many new recruits. In conjunction with MIT, UC Berkeley and Lucas Films, the military produced a video game called *America's Army* that is available from their recruiting website and melds real and virtual environments to create a simulated training ground. *Full Spectrum Warrior*, another game used in military training and distributed commercially, is also set in the Middle East and hyperlinked to the us Army recruitment site. Employing what Halter calls "military realism," the guns in these games fire the same number of bullets as real guns, military maneuvers replicate real military training practices and the enemy invariably looks like Saddam Hussein. The trailer for *America's Army* promotes the game as a site of civic engagement, invoking the user to "help liberate the oppressed" or to "empower yourself, defend freedom." The conflation of the virtual and the real becomes even more pronounced in *KUMA!WAR* games where, as Halter notes, through online subscriptions gamers receive playable missions based on current news reports. Supplying the viewer with not just a cinematic language, but with a set of skills in which to participate in war, the real conditions of countries like Afghanistan and Iraq become an extension of the hyper-reality of the video game. If this sounds like a paranoid fantasy, it is

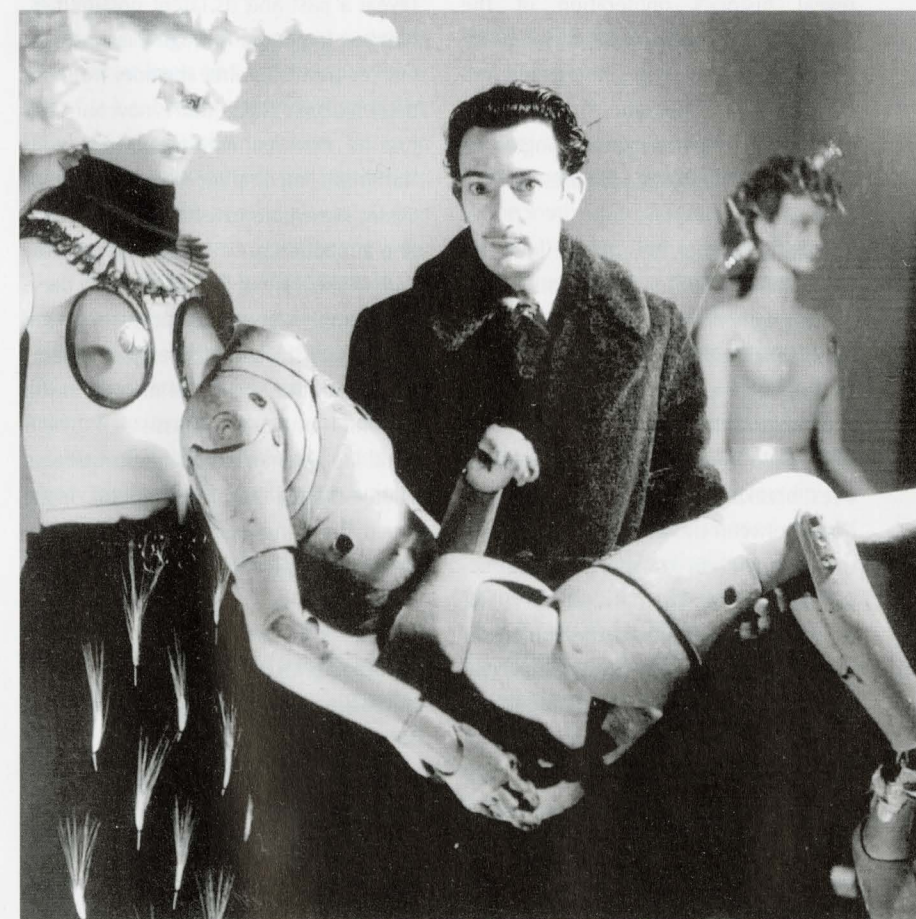
because these are paranoid fantasies. Halter describes an agreement between several major Hollywood film studios and the us government by which film productions obtained access to army facilities in exchange for making scripts approved by the military. This led to an uncritically glamorous portrayal of military service, exemplified by major motion pictures such as *Top Gun*, one of the first films produced under this arrangement.⁴ If the cinema is one of the places where political consciousness is shaped, it would make sense that post-9/11 reality has seemed at times like a bad movie. In 2002 the us military met with a group of Hollywood screenwriters to imagine possible terrorist scenarios. At around the same time Karl Rove, a senior White House advisor, convened with a number of Hollywood movie executives to discuss Hollywood's contribution to the war effort.⁵

Resisting Paradise, set in the French coastal town of Cassis near the Spanish border, is ambiguous and arguably difficult in its logic. From within the beautiful stillness of this place Barbara Hammer narrates a counter-history of the Jewish Resistance. Hammer was drawn to this fishing village to film the light that had enticed Henri Matisse and other painters including Van Gogh, Renoir and Duras. While she was there, the war broke out in Kosovo, sending waves of refugees across Europe, invoking her to ask "how art can exist in a time of war" and inspiring her to produce a film of this place through the lens of her questioning. While interrogating the work of Matisse and his iconic images of beauty, she maps a force of resistance that radiated from the streets of Cassis through countless actions, interviewing people who forged papers, smuggled people out to sea under the cover of night to meet rescue boats and guided people across the mountains to their

escape. Describing the heroic work of these ordinary people, she explores the problem of how suffering can exist amidst such beauty, the question that is often presented as the aesthetic paradox of the twentieth century.

In *Remembrance of Things to Come* Denise Bellon's beautiful images of the years between the world wars evoke a visual memory that is almost always shadowed by the events that followed. In Bellon's photographs we see Paris before it was re-written by WWII, workmen arrived from the country, as Marker describes them, "...pour(ing) asphalt as though they were pouring wine." She captures draught horses tied outside the gates of the Tuileries castle, the bridges and the first cinematheque. We also see

Yannik and her sister Loleh as children, the surrealists, the men with shattered faces who served testament to the travesty of war, piles of scrap metal to be turned into bullets and the images of the parachutists and the woman laying on the banks of a river in the warm sunlit air of late spring. A decade after these images were taken, Marker notes, a photograph of a naked body beside a river would come to evoke the image of bodies laying alongside roads after German planes had flown overhead, and the parachutist would become synonymous with the paratrooper. The draft horses would be gone, the 1940 Olympics would be postponed until 1952, and some of the surrealists — those with foreign sounding names — would find themselves in internment camps.



Denise Bellon, *Salvador Dalí with Mannequin*, 1938 Surrealist Exposition, Paris, still from *Remembrance of Things to Come*, 2003.

Bellon and Marker deduce that if the image can be used to remember the past, perhaps it can also reveal something of the future. The film begins with Bellon's photographs of the International Surrealist Exhibition in Paris, held in 1938. There are mannequins covered in insects or dismembered and transforming into machines, a menacing statuette with a distorted face. The filmmakers note that the press reacted to the show with insult. For them, such art seemed ridiculous and incomprehensible when Europe was readying itself for war. Anticipating the possibility that we may one day be unrecognizable even to ourselves, the work of the surrealists was uncanny in its predictive accuracy. As the surrealists noted the marriage of the body to progress and its deathly outcomes, Bellon and Marker reveal history's obliteration of the memory of what could have been. Through these beautiful photographs and their careful cinematic framing one glimpses a forgotten place, bringing its visual trace to bear upon the present.

Barbara Hammer, Yannik Bellon and Chris Marker counter the plausible outcomes engineered by these imaging practices, soliciting a utopian promise from images of the past. Bellon's photographs evoke alternate possibilities from those that unfold from familiar historical narratives, breaking the illusion of a mimetic bond between the image of history and the past, thereby transforming the texture of memory. The narrator tells us of Bellon's photographs of the bridges of Paris "...in fact only the names will change. There is a pont Neuf, a pont de Bercy, but no pont de Bir Hakeim. Nobody knows where Bir Hakeim is, nor Birkenau, which will literally succeed it in the dictionary with the comment: very close to Auschwitz." If our past selves can become unknowable to us, then the

places we once inhabited can become unrecognizable too.

In the case of the photographs from Abu Ghraib, the clear correspondence between the images and the subjects they depict enables viewers to read them as indicative of a failure that is bureaucratic, democratic and moral. While creating one reality, the images presented by Farocki annihilate another, concealing the visible trace of this destruction. There are, thankfully, other images in the memory museum. Bellon's images mark the disappearance of one world and foreshadow the catastrophe to come. But in order to have their affect upon the viewer, they draw us into the short-lived culture where the Popular Front was discovering their bodies, the seaside and skydiving. They reveal a past and its latent possibilities, however forgotten. Through this montage, Marker and Bellon free memory from the determinism of their future, now our past. Just as *Resisting Paradise* begins with Hammer's meditation on the light of Cassis, *Remembrance of Things to Come* is also a meditation on the light of pre-war Paris. If the trace of light captured in these photographs gives us access to the memory of the past, these places themselves mark the survival of the past in the present. Hammer films Cassis as if it were a still life, illuminated by the oblique rays of an autumnal sun, this beautiful village much the same as in 1945 when thousands of people fleeing the Nazis found refuge there.

Hammer gives visibility to what at the time had to be done in absolute secrecy — the work of the resistance — showing us their faded archival images and the places they once inhabited. Alongside the photographs of refugees, Nazi speeches, the quiet streets of Cassis, she presents the familiar quote from Walter Benjamin: "A

storm from paradise is blowing so violently that the angel of history cannot close her wings."⁶ If this quote suggests that we cannot repair the past, from these images perhaps we can better understand how to repair the present. Hammer's archival stills of people surrounded by trees and mountain peaks, ascending a rugged path, these are not images of people on an outing, enjoying the fresh air, but of refugees escaping through the Swiss Alps. Staging an unexpected recovery and transforming the texture of memory, perhaps these misrecognitions can help evoke the imaginative possibilities necessary for reparation.

Notes

1. Ramonet, Ignacio. "Torture in a Good Cause." *Le Monde Diplomatique*, June 2004: 1.
2. Sontag, Susan. "The photographs are us." *The New York Times Magazine*, 23 May 2004.
3. The danger of this comparison is that it risks suggesting that perhaps "the porn made them do it," a problematic argument that Frank Rich recently described in *The New York Times*. Rich notes that organizations including Concerned Women for America, the Family Research Council and the Heritage Foundations, are using these images as artillery in their homophobic crusade, blaming the events at Abu Ghraib on MTV, on gay and lesbian marriage and on TV shows like *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*. Sontag's prose is far too strident to invite such an odious and homophobic reading.
4. According to Halter, military enrollment went up by 400 percent following the release of *Top Gun*. Supporting his argument, *The New York Times* recently reported thirty percent of a group of young people with positive views of the military formed their views as a result of playing *America's Army* (*New York Times Magazine*, 22 August 2004: 35).
5. Zimmerman, Patricia. "Blasting War." *Afterimage*, Winter 2003: 5.
6. This quote appears with slightly different wording in Fragment IX of Walter Benjamin's essay "On the Concept of History," most recently translated and published in *Selected Writings*. Balknap Press: Cambridge MA, 1996: 392.

Amish Morrell is a Phd student at oise/University of Toronto. He is writing about the re-staging of images of the past in contemporary photography and how these practices shift narrative conceptions of time.

Artists, Rebels, Warriors:

Desh Pardesh's Legacy and the Future of Radical South Asian Art

by Leah Lakshmi Piepznsa-Samarasinha

Now that Jay-Z is sampling Panjabi mc beats and Le Chateau's "body dots" (a.k.a. bindis) are so three years ago, it's hard to remember that being brown in the '70s and '80s sucked. It meant feeling like you were from another planet — one where your food stank, your parents were "weird" and you were trying to balance traditional culture with the realities of growing up second-generation. Things were even worse if you were a girl who wanted to avoid marriage, a boy who wanted other boys, a time-expired Indian from Trinidad, a desi bent on revolution.

In late '80s Toronto onward, Desh Pardesh was the answer to that suckiness. It was iconic, the Mecca for radical South Asian arts and activism. "There was nothing like it anywhere else," says Bushra Rehman, queer Pakistani poet and 2000 Desh alumnus. And there wasn't. Desh Pardesh got kicked off in 1989 with a one-day event, *Salaam Toronto*, produced by Khush, Toronto's pioneering lesbian and gay South Asian group. It went on to become an annual global hookup for radical desi culture.

At least in theory and often in practice, Desh promoted a groundbreaking vision of the South Asian diaspora, one that went beyond North India and Pakistan, stretching to Jaffna, San Fernando and Nairobi. Rosina Kazi, frontwoman for the Toronto-based South Asian underground band Lal, remembers, "When I performed at Desh's Youth Stage in 1998, it was the first time I'd ever seen South Asians who didn't fit the mold. Looking out in the audience you had dark-skinned people, light-skinned people, Black folks, Asians. It changed my life." Desh was baratya nayam mixed up with hiphop, aunties in black-lace saris reading erotica, radical Muslim feminists and Sri Lankan community theatre about workers' rights and civil wars. Desh helped make a South Asian political scene in Toronto like none other — one about marching with other people of colour against police brutality and for First Nations solidarity, where queers were

in the centre as cultural workers and community leaders and you didn't have to check your sexuality at the door.

When Desh folded in 2000, a victim of funding cuts and debt, it was the end of era. Along with Desh had gone much of the cultural milieu of '90s Toronto that surrounded it. I close my eyes and remember: At *the Crossroads* magazine, A Different Booklist (in its first incarnation as North America's only queer-of-colour bookstore), Press Gang and Sister Vision Press, Sistah's Cafe, Funkasia, regular queer people of colour nights at the Red Spot, an anarchist scene with arguably more people of colour than any other in North America, *Fireweed* and spoken word and DJ nights at 52 Inc. In 2004 most of them are dead, or significantly transformed. The ones that have hung on, like Toronto's SAVAC (South Asian Visual Arts Collective, still making groundbreaking, radical desi art), face a climate of diminished art funding, the funding that made it possible for our communities to

create them in the first place. Every cultural icon on the above list existed in a genuinely underground cultural milieu, before the '90s cultural monster ate up every underground movement and spat it back out to sell ads. Back then we had both the power and the disadvantages of being off the radar.

Although it's easy to look back at Desh as utopian, it was never without fierce internal debates. Putting together a festival covering everything South Asian in the West (in five days!) raised many difficult questions that often needed sorting out in order to proceed. Desh struggled with how to ensure that all parts of the diaspora — all the countries, dispersals, religions, classes, castes, genders and sexualities — could come to the table. How do you make a festival that appeals to second-generation youth who need to find a place where brown is cool and one that appeals to older folks whose issues are different? How do you bring together downtown art-sies and working-class desis who live two hours away in Rexdale and Mississauga? How do you balance the need to create a queer-positive, radical South Asian safe without making it accessible only to a particular artsy and middle-class elite? Desh argued about these questions from its beginning to its end. What has changed is the idea that one space can serve all of us.

There was a particular career pathway for those of us who came of age as artists-activists in the '80s and '90s, inside a particular fragile but solid alternative cultural world of feminist small publishers, arts festivals and indie labels, low on cash and high on community involvement. It worked like this: do as many festivals as possible and do them well and you will have a career. All it took was enough important anthology publications and performances at demos and activist-run

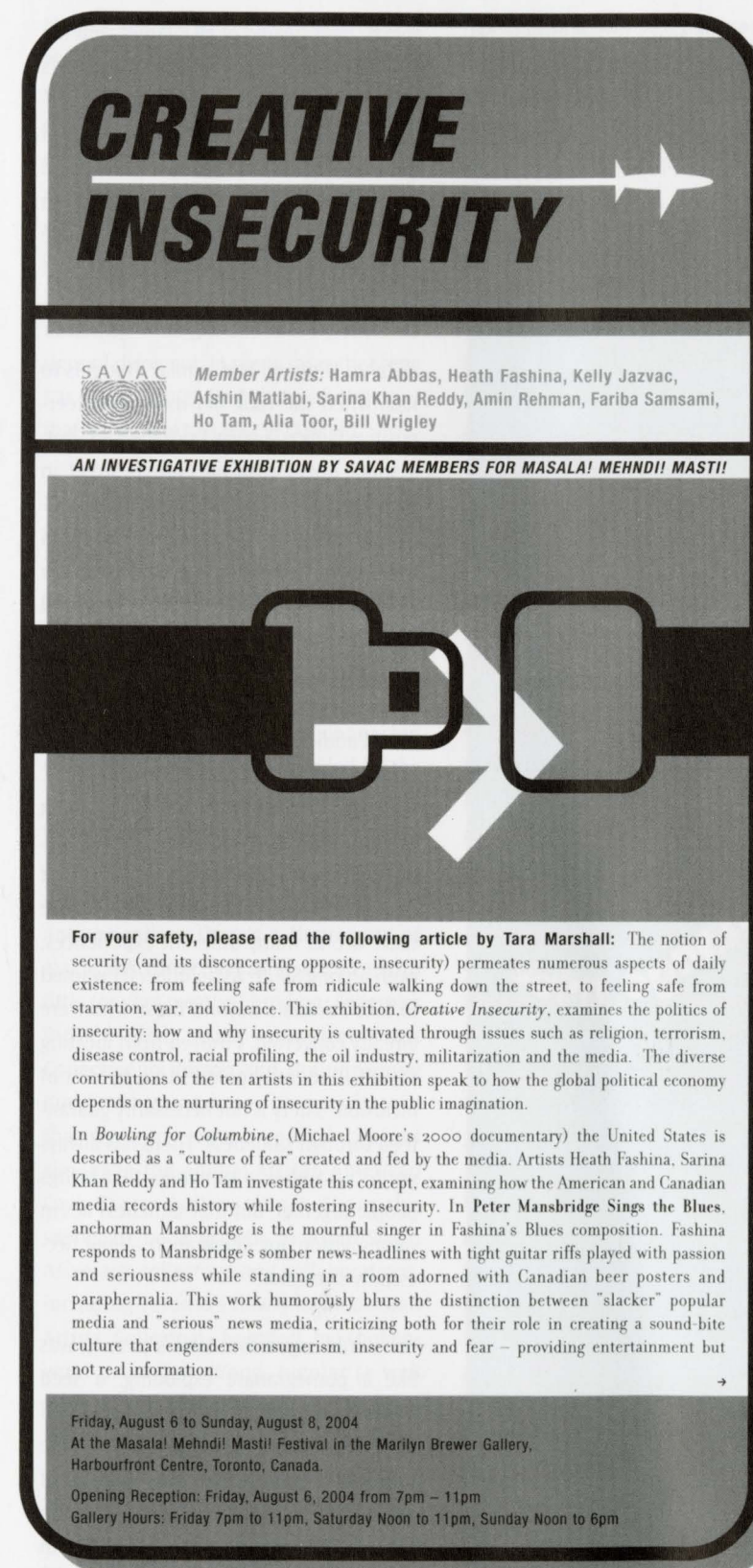
clubs. Being able to quit your day job was not an option most folks I knew considered, but the idea of becoming activist-famous — of being loved, needed and respected for doing work that served the people — was.

Many of us believed, for good reasons, that only at identity-specific festivals would anybody get what the fuck we were on about. "When I moved to New York and started doing spoken word at places like the Nuyorican, I won titles but I knew most of the time nobody had any idea of what I was talking about," remembers Marian Yalini Thambayagam, queer Sri Lankan spoken-word artist and member of the all API women's performance troupe Mango Tribe. "Sometimes there'd be one guy in the audience who was also Lankan and would run up to me after I did pieces that talked about the civil war or other Lanka specific themes and be so grateful. But most people outside of the desi don't even know where Sri Lanka is." Thambayagam started out performing at specifically South Asian spaces like Desi Q and at events attached to Youth Solidarity Summer, an annual activist camp for South Asian youth in New York. At the same time she also came up as a performer through pan-people of colour spaces like Austin's Drive By Players theatre troupe and just wrapped up directing *Descendants of Freedom*, a "futuristic queer hip-hop odyssey" written by Andre Lancaster. "What I find is that my alliances are not just about being desi, and even when translation is necessary there are some really powerful things about art that builds alliances between queer people of colour coming from different cultures."

Rosina Kazi has programmed the hip-hop/urban stage at Harbourfront's Masala! Masti! Mendhi! summer South Asian festival for the past four years. "It's



Invitation to the SAVAC Fundraiser, 2004, Courtesy: SAVAC, Design: Parth Uradhye



Catalogue for *Creative Insecurity*, 2004, Courtesy: SAVAC, Design: Shafik Jaffer

much more mainstream — it's Harbourfront — but in some ways that's a good thing. Harbourfront doesn't have an explicitly political mandate like Desh Pardesh, but we're reaching people from Mississauga who never came to Desh when

it existed." This year's programming featured plenty of food and a definite "celebrate our culture" vibe, but also included programming on the one-year anniversary of last summer's Project Thread raids on twenty-one Muslim men thought to be ter-

rorists, later cleared of all charges, and the vibrant community organizing of Toronto's "Project Threadbare" against it. Also featured was the Sri Lankan-front-womaned indie rock of controller.controller, up and coming brown hiphop acts from Mississauga and Rexdale and the "Creative Insecurity" visual-art exhibit that delved into notions of security and "terrorism."

DJ Zahra Dhanani had similar thoughts to Kazi when she took her monthly queer-positive Funkasia party from the Red Spot, a small queer club on Church Street in Toronto that often held queer people-of-colour nights in the late '90s, to Fly, a three-storey nightclub in the heart of gay clubland. The move brought Funkasia and Dhanani national media exposure and transformed the night from a locally beloved event to one with a much more mixed audience. "Desh and Funkasia both came out of a particular time and place. We thought there was safety in staying underground and sometimes there was. But there came a point we realized that no space is automatically safe, because there are so many different experiences, even among South Asian queers. I wanted to take Funkasia beyond those who were already converted. I moved from locating myself in identity politics to a politics of inclusion. Safety is not necessarily guaranteed through sameness. There has always got to be a glue, a sameness that brings people together, but that sameness lies in values, vision, joy, celebration — not necessarily skin color."

You could argue that Desh's passing was like a pomegranate exploding, a seed bomb from which many underground South Asian radical culture groups continue to flourish. Groups like ASATA (Alliance of South Asians Taking Action) in San Francisco, ThirdI's pan-city radical South Asian video collective Diaspora/Flow in

Minneapolis and DRUM (Desis Rising Up and Moving) in New York create many local visions of radical South Asian arts and culture. Magazines like SAMAR (South Asian Magazine of Action and Reflection) document the movement and the global network of queer and feminist club nights like Toronto's Metro Desi and Besharam (run by former Funkasia DJ Amita) and New York's Basement Bhangra and Mutiny show no signs of dying out. In many cases the scene has exploded post-Desh, but with strategies that are unique to a post 9/11 world.

SAWCC (South Asian Women's Creative Collective), Minneapolis's DiasporaFlow and Mango Mic's Bay Area API poetry slam are current examples of how small collectives can produce shows without core funding. Other new pan-Asian creative collectives are springing up throughout the States, often connected to the Chicago Collective founded by the pan-Asian spoken-word group I Was Born with Two Tongues. With harder times and artwork that is often done (and needs to be done) at immigrant rights or antiwar rallies, there's a flourishing of Asian arts collectives that are run with little (or very creative) funding. Examples include the Asian American Arts Collective in Boston and the upcoming Kundiman pan-Asian writing conference that seeks to create a space for Asians similar to the annual African-American Cave Canem writers retreat. There also seems to be a growth in Asian/South Asian arts collectives and collaborations, including Toronto's newly formed Asian Artists Collective, founded by spoken-word artist Gein Wong, Jugular (a well known Toronto-based South Asian beat-boxer) and Rosina Kazi this past spring.

The effect that post-9/11 crackdowns have had on artists' freedom of movement can't be ignored. Beyond being a basic human

right, crossing borders is necessary to build careers that reach globally. In March of 2004, Lal was enroute to a gig at Minneapolis's DiasporaFlow, a youth-of-colour arts collective run on a shoestring by Sri Lankan visual artist Chamindika Wanduragala and poet/dancer Pradeepa Jeevamanohan. DiasporaFlow is one of the most exciting South Asian arts organizations, using hiphop and spoken-word culture to reach youth in public schools and building ciphers of radical people of colour and South Asian artists in Minneapolis — obvious folks for Lal to build with. Male members of the band were questioned extensively at US immigration, but eventually made it onto the plane and thought everything was fine. However, moments before takeoff, flight marshals entered the plane, announcing that the men were being removed "in the interest of national security." DiasporaFlow lost more than a thousand dollars it couldn't afford in unrefundable tickets and, needless to say, the gig didn't happen. There are many more stories like theirs. Before 9/11, for what now looks like only a brief moment, artists jetted across countries with relative ease. If you could afford the ticket or there was transportation money available, you could perform at festivals in London, LA and New York, build your career, and most importantly, reach a community that spreads globally.

With Bush 2's recent re-coronation, cross-border travel restrictions show no signs of improving anytime soon, forcing us to rethink how we do our work. Do we stop crossing borders? Do festivals and venues take this risk of fronting travel costs for folks who have been stopped before? There are no easy answers, but it seems likely that while no-fly lists may have a dampening effect, life still goes on and few artists are willing to stop flying altogether.

The time of the big cultural festival that tries to do it all may have passed, but that doesn't mean the end of a radically brown vision. Our community organizations are always fragile, but sometimes we take them for granted. Sometimes we forget how much sweat and blood and late-night meetings after work went into their creation. What never goes away is the need to create our own space and make the cultural revolutions we need. "People always make what they need," says Dhanani. "When clubs become too expensive to rent, house parties start happening. Where there is a gap, we find a way to fill it. That's always been true. That's how Desh started."

Doing so means creative strategies; dancing between the challenges of corporate funding and basement dwelling, being reviled as terrorists and beloved as the next hip thing. But when has it ever been any different?

I owe a lot to Bakirathi Mani's essay "Destination Culture: A Critical Look at South Asian Arts and Activism Festivals in North America," which appeared in samar magazine's Fall/Winter 2001 issue.

Resources

Lal: <http://www.ptmusic.com>
 SAVAC (South Asian Visual Artist Collective): <http://www.savac.net>
 Funkasia: <http://www.djzahra.com>
 Masala! Mehndi! Masti!: <http://www.harbourfrontcentre.com/summerfestivals/masala.php>
 DRUM (Desis Rising Up and Moving): www.drumnation.com
 ThirdI: <http://www.thirdi.org>
 Artwallah: <http://www.artwallah.org>
 SAMAR magazine: <http://www.samarmagazine.org>
 Diaspora Flow: <http://www.diasporafollow.org>
 Kundiman: <http://www.kundiman.org>
 Mango Tribe: <http://www.mangotribe.com>
 Asian American Writer's Workshop: <http://www.aaww.org>

Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha is a queer Sri Lankan writer and spoken word artist. Her work has been published in Colonize This!, Without a Net, Brazen Femmes, Bitch, Colorlines, Mizna and Lodestar Quarterly.

Sisters in the Smoke
 July 17 - 19, 2003 at 8:30pm and July 19, 2003 at 3:00pm
 HERE Arts center
 145 6th Ave. (between Spring & Broomer)
 mango tribe

Mango Tribe is an APLA women's performance collective that promotes multi-arts collaboration and encourages artistic activism through theater & education. Mango Tribe is a part of the Asian American Artists Collective.

A group of multi-ethnic, multi-racial, multi-generational women of various ages and ethnicities that are inspired by the issue of violence in the Asian Pacific Islander American (APIA) community.

www.mangotribe.com

MANGO TRIBE

This project was partially supported by a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation Multi-Arts Production Fund

Invitation to a Mango Tribe performance, Courtesy: Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha
 Design: Mango Tribe Productions



this project is an attempt to re-dress current relations between natives and non-natives by re-examining the intent, issue, and details of the canadian government's 'certificate of indian status,' more commonly known as 'treaty card,' mainly in the plains on the landbase now called canada.

when the treaties were signed it was between a chief on behalf of the people and a representative of the queen on behalf of her people. since the treaties were made between at least two parties, then both should have a card. today 'treaty indians' are the only holders of the card which is commonly known to be a carry-over from the reserve pass system whereby indian people living on reserves were not allowed to leave (to hunt & gather, visit relatives, or carry out business) unless the indian agent who also controlled food rations would issue this pass. perhaps this is why the card is a canadian government issue and doesn't acknowledge the original treaty agreement as much as it attempts to control the identity & movement of the card holder by branding holders as "an indian within the meaning of the indian act, chapter 27, statutes of canada," and has efficiently trained card holders to present them as a regular part of daily interaction (and sadly even used to boast as some elevated form of government certification).

to this end, enclosed with this magazine is a blank treaty card for your use. should this card be missing, you can also use the interactive online version, found at <http://treatycard.banff.org>.

Information for first time non-native card holders only:

the purpose of the 'treaty card' has been to track the movement, i.e. spending patterns, prescription drug use, doctor & dentists' care, police contact, social services use, etc., and institutionalise the identity of "...indian(s) within the meaning of the indian act, chapter 27, statutes of canada."

For current holders: this version will enable you to provide more relevant information as it pertains to your landbase (i.e., original names in your language & hopefully a more flattering photo of yourself).

For metis, non-status: this version allows you to finally have your own personal facsimile of the gov't issue (if you've been feeling left out of the club). If you are part of a 'surrendered' band and/or are under re-entitlement this can be added in the place of origin/birth field.

For non-natives: never let the words "i wish I had a treaty card" pass your lips again - sign up today.

Need help filling out the form or wonder about the terminology?

information from the original/existing *certificate of indian status* has been modified to allow everyone to now hold a *treatycard*. if you are confused by the terminology, or need clarification, please refer to the following:

given first name replaces previous government card information of *Given names*. simply type in your legal first name

surname/colonized name replaces previous government card information of *Family name*. simply type in your last name. for some, your last name may have been established because of one of your ancestors' names changed from its original language into english or french (i.e. Littlechief=Okimasis / Apisis=Petite, etc.) or you may have been given the last name of the priest or the indian agent, hence your last name is 'colonised.'

alias/original/chosen name is for a nickname or alternate name (i.e., middle name), or if you know it, your ancestor's original name.

date of birth enter your information as follows: YYYY/MM/DD.

place of origin/birth

Band name (status) enter your band name. if you know it, here is your chance to have the *certificate of indian status*. if you don't have this information, use the name of your township, settlement or other locale where you were born or where you live on the prairies/plains, you are on

place of origin/birth field. if you don't have this information, use the name of your township, settlement or other locale where you were born or where you live on the prairies/plains, you are on. place your card into a plastic sleeve.

For some of the following: wear it on your body as your

- memorize the registry number & be prepared to quote it by stating "my treaty number is _____"
- present it whenever identification is requested
- present it when you purchase anything
- present it when you visit the doctors', dentists' or any other government subsidized health practitioner
- present it when visiting any government agency
- present it if stopped by the police or rcmp
- most importantly, take note of how it feels always have to account for your identity
- show off to your friends by stating that you now finally have "your very own treaty card"
- refer to yourself as being 'treaty' above any other type of self identification



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date of birth enter your information as follows: YYYY/MM/DD.

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For all first nations (status and non-status) enter your band name. if you know how to write it in your original language, here is your chance to have the information corrected from the previous *certificate of indian status*.

For metis people you can either add the name of your township, settlement or colony and use the original locator name. if you don't have this information, use english or french.

For all others use either the town/city/locale where you were born or where you feel like you are 'from.' remember, if you live on the prairies/plains, you are on treaty land.

affix photo where indicated and insert entire card into a plastic sleeve.

please consider taking action and do all or some of the following:

- carry this card in your wallet, purse or on your body as your primary form of identification
- memorize the registry number & be prepared to quote it by stating "my treaty number is _____"
- present it whenever identification is requested
- present it when you purchase anything
- present it when you visit the doctors', dentists' or any other government subsidized health practitioner
- present it when visiting any government agency
- present it if stopped by the police or rcmp
- most importantly, take note of how it feels always have to account for your identity
- show off to your friends by stating that you now finally have "your very own treaty card"
- refer to yourself as being 'treaty' above any other type of self identification



Raising the Platform:

Goll & Nielsen, *Vandervoort Place*, 1999-2000

Goll & Nielsen on Site-specificity, Interrogation and the Social Consequences of the Encounter

Interview with Janna Graham and Kim Simon

Last spring, the Danish artist-curator collaborative Goll & Nielsen were in Toronto preparing for the Niagara Falls Artist Host Program, an exhibition linking established local artists with their more recently arrived immigrant and refugee colleagues at artist-run centre Mercer Union. With the goal of developing “lasting, professional friendships” and a platform to discuss increasingly restrictive immigrant, refugee and asylum legislation, Goll & Nielsen will reconfigure the gallery as an orientation, meeting and exhibition space.

This undertaking follows on the heels of other Goll & Nielsen projects that have used the context of art to interrogate issues ranging from the nationalist rhetoric of the Danish government to gentrification in New York City and neo-liberal economics in Europe. Exploring the implications and social consequences of an issue, Goll & Nielsen projects generate dialogue between people across social, artistic and geographic boundaries, revealing the complexities of site, identity formation and the social consequences of the encounter.

FUSE Magazine’s Kim Simon and Janna Graham interviewed them late one night after a day of meetings in Toronto.

FUSE: Goll & Nielsen skirts the borders of a number of practices. Could you tell us how you characterize your work and collaboration?

TONE: Goll & Nielsen consists of two people: Morten Goll who is a visual artist and Tone O. Nielsen, an independent curator. We started collaborating as Goll & Nielsen parallel to our individual practices in 1998. This allows us both to step into different roles and hybridize the conventional roles of the artist and the curator. We are also interested in negotiating or

bridging the conventional gap between aesthetics and activism and the gallery space and public space. You could say that all our projects are based on efforts to create alternative community structures or informational structures that will eventually lead to the disturbance of stereotypical notions of identity.

MORTEN: Something that runs through all the Goll & Nielsen projects is that we produce platforms to facilitate meetings and exchanges — not just for the meeting or the exchange itself, but in order to create a

change of some kind. There is a notion of pragmatism in all of Goll & Nielsen's projects, meaning we don't start out with an utopian idea about what we would like to create. Instead we look at the site and start with its reality.

FUSE: How do you position yourself in relation to the sites with which you work?

TONE: Usually we work with sites that are familiar to us. In the case of our *Vandervoort Place* project in Brooklyn, we lived in the neighborhood for one year. For us "site-specific" means that we bring voices of a particular site, often very conflicting voices, to the forefront and create a platform where they can be heard and exchanged. There is always a great degree of self-reflexivity in our projects; we are always very aware of our own identities in relation to the site and of biased viewpoints. Our project for Mercer Union in Toronto in December this year will actually be the first time that we have been commissioned to do a project at a site that we are not familiar with.

FUSE: Do you want to say what you intend to do in Toronto?

TONE: We are producing a project entitled *Niagara Falls Artist Host Program*. In light of the challenges posed by migration in the era of capitalist globalization and the ways Western countries have responded to these by a continuous tightening of their immigration, integration and asylum policies, we propose to create an artist host program. The program will set up its office in the gallery spaces of Mercer Union and work to establish lasting professional friendships between artists with a refugee/immigrant background and well-connected Canadian artists. For the duration of the show, the program will recruit volunteer hosts and guests, organize talks on the topic of Canadian immigration and asylum law and mount exhibitions/events by the various guests and hosts.

MORTEN: For us, site-specificity requires not only an

analysis of geography or topography but also what is socially specific to a site.

FUSE: Can you talk about this model of site-specificity in relation to one of your projects?

MORTEN: In *The Evening School*, we really wanted to talk about all the different ethnicities that presently populate the Oresound region (northern part of Denmark and southern part of Sweden) but which are not all included in or do not all fit with notions of "Danishness" or "Swedishness." The Oresound region was established when the Danish and Swedish governments decided to build a bridge between the two countries in 2000 and there was all of this political rhetoric promoting a new type of identity — the so-called "Sound-regioner." For us, this was an excuse to start a conversation about the construction of national identities, inclusion and exclusion.

The citizens in the region were being told that they were no longer Swedes or Danes, but "Sound-Regioners." Goll & Nielsen took this situation as its starting point for a new project. For three weeks, we established an evening school in the gallery spaces of Gallery Signal in Malmö, Sweden, during which the public was invited to attend fifteen different courses dealing with various aspects of Danish and Swedish culture and national identity. The courses were conceptualized and directed by invited artists, historians, activists, architects and anthropologists, none of whom fit the category of "Dane" or "Swede." With *The Evening School*, we wanted to provide a constructive platform for alternative identity building and considered the bridge a somewhat euphoric moment for the deconstruction of national identity.

FUSE: Was there a cultural program that was attached to the political rhetoric surrounding the promotion of this new Swedish-Danish culture?

TONE: There was a huge official program called "Culture Bridge." It was supported by fifty million

Danish and Swedish tax crowns. But it didn't support binational collaborations, only projects being done on either side of the bridge designed to attract one to the other side.

MORTEN: It was more about bringing the Danish Opera to Sweden so that the Swedes could hear them and continue to build on this magnificent stereotypical notion of what Danish culture is and vice versa. It was the stereotyped notion of culture, which once again was being abused to reinforce national identity.

FUSE: What were the economic motivations for the bridge and the cultural alliance?

TONE: The two nations had been wanting to build a bridge between Denmark and Sweden for hundreds of years, but couldn't agree.

MORTEN: By the 1990s, some really large industrial corporations in Sweden were lobbying for a freeway system called "Scanlink." Scanlink's purpose was to connect Sweden and Germany. Before the bridge was constructed one had to use ferries to transport goods from Sweden to central Europe. But they could not have that bridge without the Danish and Swedish governments paying for it through tax crowns. In order for that to happen, they couldn't just come out and say that actually Volvo needed a bridge to go to Germany. As it happened, the bridge leads the Scanlink freeway through Denmark and both the Danish and the Swedish tax payers paid for it.

TONE: The Sound region was also an attempt to create a new investment sector for EU capital and foreign investors. Compared to California, where Morten and I lived for five years and had the opportunity to see how border issues are analyzed and worked through artistically and theoretically in a very sophisticated manner, we were astonished by the way Danish and Swedish media, politicians and cultural producers simplified or ridiculed the issue of the bridge by producing "hybrid" projects that completely failed to engage issues of glob-

alization and post-colonialism.

One of these projects involved artists planting trees that were then forced to grow together to form this perfect union, symbolizing the coming together of Swedes and Danes.

MORTEN: We also wanted to work with the rhetoric surrounding the bridge. To us, there was a discrepancy between how the bridge was talked about as a cultural meeting point by politicians and corporations and their actual intentions with the bridge. They promoted the bridge as this coming together of two nations, but they never made any effort to adjust Danish and Swedish legislation in order to allow the two populations to integrate in terms of work and taxes. In other words, the two governments were never really interested in fogging up national borders or national identities. So that was the point where Goll & Nielsen decided to insert ourselves. We took them on their word and pushed it. The idea of *The Evening School* was to invite all who felt excluded from the official national identities of the two countries to get together and start a process of redefining and developing more inclusive identity models. Naturally, this led us to address not only the ethnic Danes and Swedes who deviate from these national identity models, but all the immigrant and refugee communities of the region who are not included in them at all. In a way, the project proposed a model of integration, but one in which the host-country identity model is up for change as much as the newcomer cultures. The vision of *The Evening School* was that all the different citizens of the Sound region should be invited to meet one another, enjoy the different courses and create an inclusive Sound-regioner identity model based on newly gained knowledge, partly from the courses, partly from meeting other Sound-regioners of different cultural backgrounds.

TONE: The logo we chose to use for *The Evening School* was a photo taken of the Crown Prince of Denmark kissing the Crown Princess of Sweden on the cheek in the middle of the bridge on the day of its inauguration, the

kiss symbolizing the meeting between the two countries. The photo is strangely awkward and if you look closely it is because the Crown Prince is stepping on the toes of the Crown Princess. The photo thus captures the moment of alienation present in any meeting and this was exactly what *The Evening School* was all about. You cannot just join two peoples, it takes a negotiation of some kind.

FUSE: Can you highlight some courses at *The Evening School*? Did people talk about the two governments and their programmatic reinforcement of nation-state ideology?

TONE: A very inspiring anthropologist, Kathrine Winther Adelsparre, did a really great workshop where she was brainstorming with the participants about what the real political-economic motivations of the bridge were and then looked historically at the different attempts to draw Swedes and Danes together. She had done a tremendous amount of research on how people felt about the bridge and also looked at how various businessmen and corporations and politicians felt. So it was a very thorough and precise analysis of the situation.

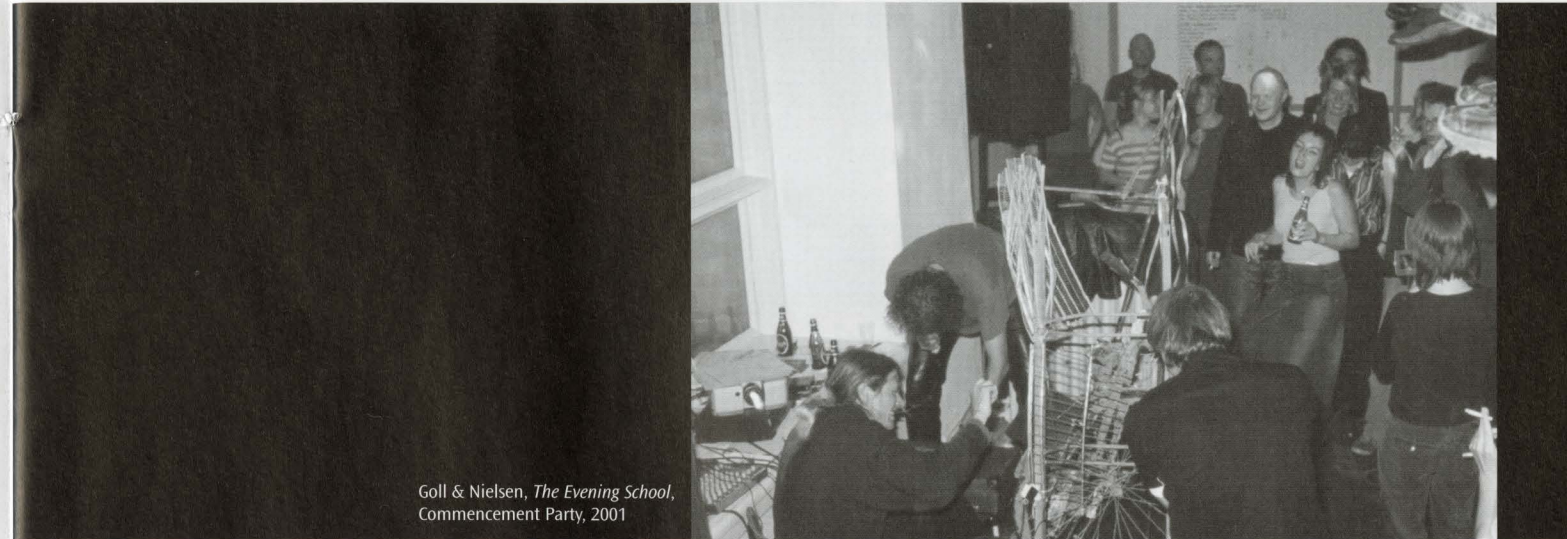
MORTEN: Most of the courses dealt with breaking down stereotypical notions of the other or of oneself for that matter. Some courses functioned as quite constructive vehicles for the construction of alternative models. The Swedish artist Petri Rappana engaged a professional tango instructor to do a course called "Tango Course for Men." During this course, sixteen men (both straight and gay) were able to, in a very practical way, renegotiate the masculine identity. During the class, the instructor made the men alternate between being the leader or the follower in the dance. Also, the two artists Karin I.M. Johansson and Annika Lundgren did a course called "Living It Up in the Sound Region." The course was an attempt to critique the stereotyped notions flourishing on both sides of the Sound about the drinking habits of the other. The course was in two parts: a theoretical lecture and then field trips to Danish and Swedish bars. It was crucial for the course

that both Swedes and Danes participated.

TONE: One thing that was interesting about *The Evening School* was that it got a tremendous amount of press. We made it a priority to spend a very large part of the budget on communication and public relations. We thus produced 5,000 free evening school programs, 5,000 flyers and 1,000 posters and made a lot of effort to distribute these beyond our usual art mailing list. The brochures were distributed to cultural organizations, youth programs and ethnic minority programs. We had them on ferries, on the trains that go over the bridge and in every café we could think of in Copenhagen and



Goll & Nielsen, Program for *The Evening School*, 2001



Goll & Nielsen, *The Evening School*, Commencement Party, 2001

Malmö. And we contacted high schools and universities in both cities and real evening schools and also tried to sell particular courses to school classes and so forth. We also sent out weekly announcements stating what courses were going to take place that week through email to a huge mailing list. But still, the first week, we didn't have that many participants. Some courses had five participants and some had ten, but then slowly the number of course participants grew and by the third week, we had as many as thirty-five to fifty participants per course.

FUSE: And they were people from and beyond the art community?

TONE: Yes, but I think in terms of the Danish and Swedish art audiences and audiences in general, there is always this suspicion. People are always a little reluctant in the beginning — can this be for real? We figured that if the evening school had continued for maybe two or three months, it would have worked better and more people would have come on a more permanent basis. But still, one problem with *The Evening School*, which we are trying to solve with the Mercer Union project, is that we were trying to address too many audience

groups, too many communities and too many neighborhoods at once.

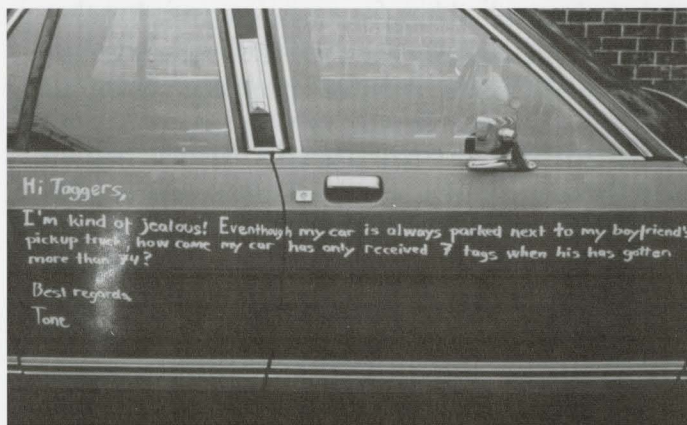
MORTEN: The format of *The Evening School* itself is a very Scandinavian thing. It ties into labour-union history and the social-democratic state's interest in lifelong education programs for its citizens. However, some of the ethnic minority groups we tried to reach probably just didn't get the tongue-in-cheek humor that was a part of the project, i.e., the employment of the state's tool of identity building for a new purpose. In other words, the project claimed to be all-inclusive, but when it came to the strategic language and format, it did not address that many minority groups. I actually don't think it is possible to engage radically different cultures with the same communication strategy. It's the same with the art world: we tend to think that our brochures and flyers are open to anyone, that we are potentially all-inclusive. But the design, language and distribution methods show that most of these brochures really address a very privileged minority, namely the two percent of middle-class kids who constitute the art scene. So, if one wants to engage in a site specific art practice which includes the social aspect of "the site," one has to be very specific in terms of the language and format

that best serves the purpose. The purpose being to open up a communication platform for one specific audience at a time.

FUSE: How do you help negotiate and construct that?

TONE: Every meeting has real social consequence and that's why a number of people have characterized our projects as anthropological. We are trying to analyze different identities and behaviors and attempting to bring them together in a certain way. But we never attempt to explain the other. Goll & Nielsen's projects are more a testimony to our inability to and the danger of trying to explain the other. The *Vandervoort Place* project, for instance, might look anthropological on the surface: we deliberately played the role of the anthropologist in the low-income East Williamsburg neighborhood we were living in, but we refused to do the field work. In other words, we refused to interpret or analyze the meaning of the graffiti on our cars. The project was about gentrification and our contribution to it as newcomer artists to the neighborhood, not the hidden messages of the graffiti writers on our cars.

MORTEN: This way we try to meet our audiences not as teachers, but as students. The entry point of all our projects is our lack of understanding.



Goll & Nielsen, *Vandervoort Place*, 1999-2000

TONE: And our limitations. It is an intentional withdrawal from that privileged position of being able to explain to people how things are. That has always been the fundamental problem of a certain form of community-based art for me — a privileged artist, educationally speaking, class speaking, moving into less-privileged neighborhoods and helping them sort out their social problems, that's one thing that we're aware of and trying to play off against.

FUSE: Sounds like you are talking about feeling wary of parachuting into a community and setting your project up. People like Miwon Kwon have critiqued this parachuting-in approach extensively and this issue was struggled with recently in Ultra-red's response to Tone's *Democracy When?* curatorial project. Do you feel there is a significance to committing to a place and a duration of time within a community context and really interrogating that as artists? Is there an importance to shorter-term durations in your work? Does this relate to your desire not to be seen to fix things?

TONE: I totally agree with Ultra-red that a lot of community-based projects are problematic in that they are often commissioned — since the early 1990s, curators have picked up on it and have commissioned projects from artists, flying them in to play around a specific neighborhood for a period of time and then flying them out again. It's highly problematic. On the other hand, I think that not all communications are long-term — I mean any relationship will end at a certain point — so you have to be able to within the project itself build a structure for its duration. In *Vandervoort Place*, we had an ongoing relationship with the graffiti artists who tagged our cars on a daily basis for a year. Their real identities remained unknown to us as we only communicated through the cars. After a year, we decided to move back to LA and felt obliged to close the communication in a decent way. It would have been a disaster to just take off one day with the cars for good without a word. So we left them a message on the cars saying that in a few days we and the cars would be gone. The message explained why and



Michael Baers, *Divestiture Booth*, in *Democracy When?*, 2002, curated by Tone O. Nielsen

invited them to leave a message on the cars for us to pass on to the West Coast.

MORTEN: It's not like a social relationship of limited duration can't have a lasting impact. The term community does not necessarily imply an everlasting or even long-term commitment, not all communities exist for long periods of time. How could a community exist forever in time?

TONE: Ultra-red makes a very important distinction between what they call activist organizing and community organizing. Community organizing being culture-based, working for social change within a specific social fabric on a long-term basis, and activist organizing reacting to a political or social urgency on a short-term basis. I think Goll & Nielsen shifts between the two. *Vandervoort Place* was a long-term communication, a dialogue happening at a very specific time between a group of people and ourselves. *The Evening School* was a short-term project about working with people within the context of the Sound region as a case study of economic and political forces. *OIENL* (*the Organization for Information on the Effects of neo-Liberalism*), our most recent initiative, is an ongoing project that addresses a variety of different communities in an analysis of neo-liberalism. *The Niagara Falls Artist Host Program* we are doing for Mercer Union is to be regarded as a pilot project, initi-

ated by us but envisioned as carrying on without us once we leave Toronto and being duplicated elsewhere. Not only can that program continue beyond the termination of the Mercer show, it will also have created meetings and a readymade model that other artists can take up anywhere similar conditions exist. We might have facilitated and initiated the project, but it is not dependent upon us — and this is something new for Goll & Nielsen's practice.

FUSE: The idea of a replicable model seems, from what you said about site-specificity, to really be the other side of the spectrum.

MORTEN: The part of the program which is replicable is not the aesthetic format or the exterior structure. It is a structure that enables an identity model based on fluidity.

TONE: I think it would be really nice if some of the work we did, if some of the meetings we initiated on a local site could be taken up in other contexts as well, by other people. Now I don't see that as a contradiction of working site-specifically, I see that as a kind of model that is able to be reproduced and picked up by others. And in that sense, it counters the notion of temporality because the dialogue will extend beyond us.

FUSE: There are people in Canada and elsewhere who

frame work around social activation or the creation of social contexts or processes in relation to Nicolas Bourriaud's analysis of relational aesthetics. Is this something that is useful to you?

TONE: Relational aesthetics has played a huge role in Scandinavian contemporary art since at least the early 1990s. Artist-run spaces were shooting up everywhere featuring shows and artworks that orchestrated meetings of various kinds: audiences were invited to hold hands, cook in the gallery space, play a game, dance or whatever. By the mid-1990s, it had become the trademark of Scandinavia and all art students seemed to be doing this kind of work. The sad thing is that once it became a trend, it turned into a formalism and lost its potency and social consequence. There is a danger inherent in relational aesthetics when you keep repeating the act. You end up with an act that doesn't mean anything anymore.

MORTEN: It is just a formal interest in breaking the boundaries of art, paired with a limited social engagement.

TONE: I mean, if all you facilitate is a meeting between people you already know, then it has no real social consequence. In my point of view, this is what was happening in the second generation of relational aesthetics in Denmark. The projects weren't able to attract audiences outside of the art world and it just became a social situation for your friends.

MORTEN: Speaking to your own congregation.

TONE: Goll & Nielsen is informed by the legacy of relational aesthetics in the sense that we are interested in facilitating meetings. But they are not pleasant ones or easy ones.

FUSE: There has been a great deal of contemporary thought on hospitality that points to the way one is actually unwelcoming (someone, something) at the very onset of making a welcoming gesture. You seem very aware of this.

MORTEN: It's a basic concept of communication that we are trying to get a grip on. What does it mean to honestly enter a discussion or enter a dialogue with someone else? An aspect of this dialogue which is really important is that to know yourself you have to be known by the other. And for the other to know herself, she has to be known by you. So there is a moment where identity is created and it's the moment of communication. And that's the fluid identity model I was talking about before. I think the "un-welcoming attitude" you mention has to do with the fact that such a fluid identity is hard to manage. Every meeting has its impact. Fear of the other this way can be seen as fear of who am I to become? But there is no other way than to communicate, for in isolation your stable identity has no meaning or purpose. It is death.

FUSE: The concepts of knowledge and knowing are fundamental to some kind of ethical social relationship, but there are other models of ethical and just social relations that have to do with meeting people that you can never fully understand. So that concept of knowledge could also be seen as a reduction and a thematizing of somebody else on the basis of your own experience. How do you leave room for the specific experiences of those you encounter? Is there an acknowledgement that you can never really fully know?

TONE: I think that's what the meetings Goll & Nielsen try to construct are all about. The potential of not being able to fully know. It's a constant trying to put myself in your shoes and knowing that I will never be able to do so, but that I will continue and continue to try in respect, not tolerance. A complete acknowledgement that you are utterly unknowable to me, but that I care enough to try to find out.

Kim Simon is an independent curator and writer living in Toronto. Janna Graham is a writer, educator and critic living in Toronto. Both are members of the editorial committee at Fuse magazine.

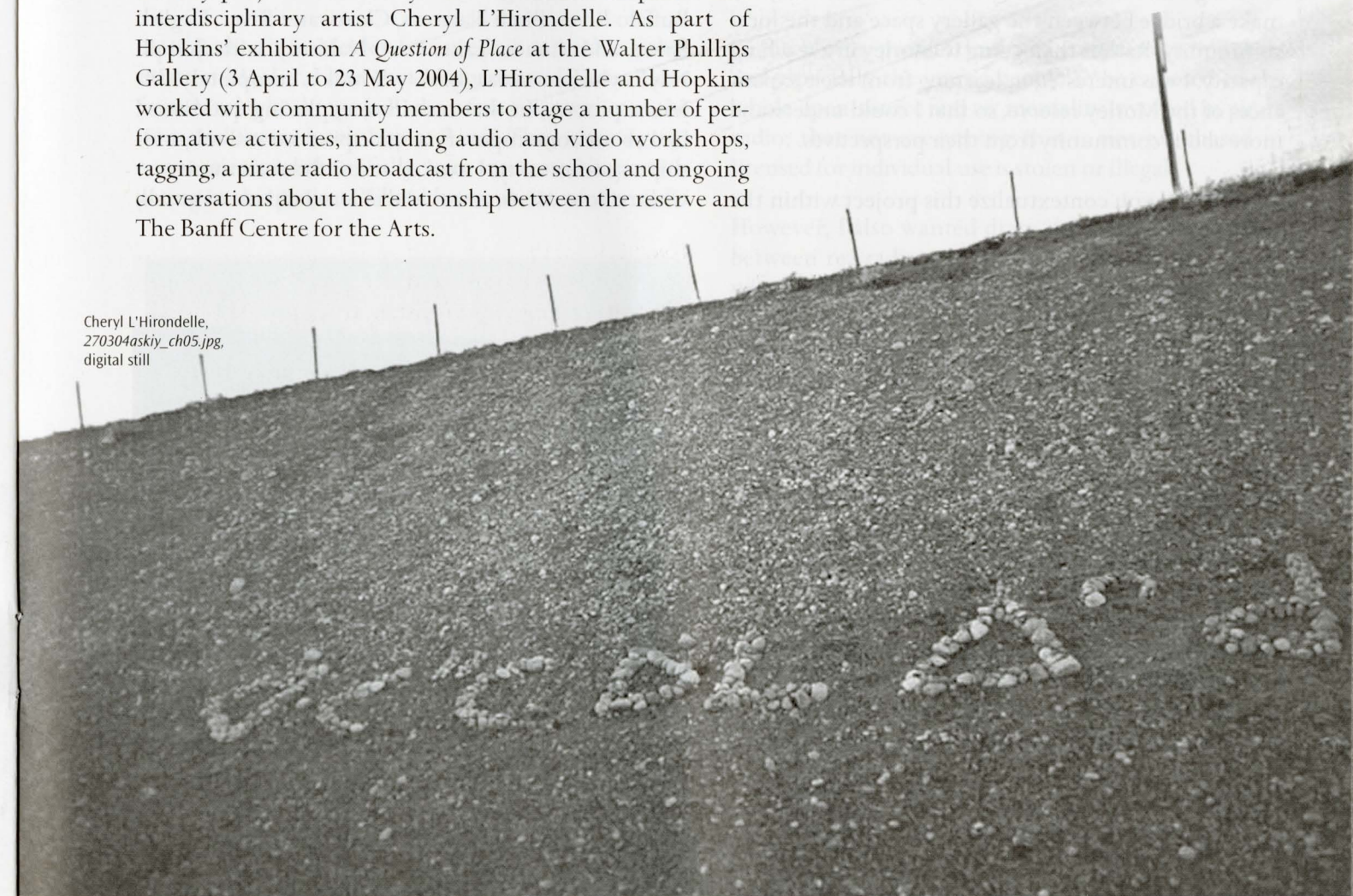
Sounding the Border:

Echoes and Transmissions from the Morley Reserve

It is a cold but sunny March afternoon and artist Cheryl L'Hirondelle is on the side of the TransCanada highway on the Morley reserve between Banff and Calgary. She is placing rocks in patterns that tag the phrase "pimiyonakwan iskonikan askiy" ("look at this leftover land") in Cree syllabics. A trucker honks. She turns and waves. Two miles away, at the Morley school, a group of high-school students are rapping, break-dancing, mixing and broadcasting radio at ten watts — a pirate transmission according to Canadian regulations.

We are at the apex of *Echoes and Transmissions*, an ongoing community project initiated by curator Candice Hopkins with interdisciplinary artist Cheryl L'Hirondelle. As part of Hopkins' exhibition *A Question of Place* at the Walter Phillips Gallery (3 April to 23 May 2004), L'Hirondelle and Hopkins worked with community members to stage a number of performative activities, including audio and video workshops, tagging, a pirate radio broadcast from the school and ongoing conversations about the relationship between the reserve and The Banff Centre for the Arts.

Cheryl L'Hirondelle,
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JANNA: (via speakerphone from an office in the Art Gallery of Ontario) Hi from Toronto!

CANDICE: (from the office of the Walter Phillips Gallery in Banff) Hi there.

CHERYL: (with Candice) Hello. Do you mind if I ask the first question?

CANDICE AND JANNA: Not at all.

CLH: Candice, what was your interest in doing an outreach project at Morley?

CH: My initial interest was to try to engage with the local Native community. Over the years the Banff Centre has put on many Aboriginal exhibitions, performances and residencies. My question was: who would be the audience for these initiatives? As I was curating the exhibition *A Question of Place*, I wanted to make a bridge between the gallery space and the local community. Rather than going to Morley in a teaching capacity, I was interested in learning from their experiences of the Morley reserve, so that I could understand more about community from their perspectives.

JG: How did you contextualize this project within the exhibition?

CH: The project was an important extension of the exhibition as a whole. The exhibition, which included works by Jimmie Durham, Zacharias Kunuk, Brian Jungen, Truman Lowe, Faye HeavyShield along with Cheryl L'Hirondelle, was an attempt to investigate ideas of place and community from Aboriginal perspectives. The works in the exhibition addressed this theme in diverse ways — something I intended from the start. Jimmie Durham's film "The Pursuit of Happiness," for example, speaks to a degree about his place as a Cherokee artist in exile from the United States and how this position — living in voluntary exile — is, in a sense, a Cherokee tradition. It didn't make sense to have an exhibition on this theme and not incorporate the voice of the local in some way.

JG: Cheryl, the projects that you undertook and are continuing to develop at Morley seem to draw from earlier process and performance-based work that you have undertaken with communities. These were projects that you developed on your own initiative, such as *cistemaw iyiniw ohci* (for the tobacco being). How did you approach this kind of work in the context of an exhibition and an institutional initiative?

CLH: I tried to forget about the institutions and instead, concentrated on the people inside them. I am more interested in relationships.

While *cistemaw iyiniw ohci* (for the tobacco being) did not take place in an institution, it was institutionally supported. It was sponsored by Tribe Inc. and was also supported by Meadow Lake Tribal Council. It was the last project I did as part of a two-year co-storyteller-in-residence at Meadow Lake First Nations (including Flying Dust, Makwa Sahgaiehcan, Island Lake, Waterhen Lake, Buffalo River, Birch Narrows, Clearwater River, English River and Canoe Lake First Nations) with Joseph Naytowhow. *cistemaw iyiniw ohci* was a completely different process. In that case I was exploring questions I had about contemporary artistic practice and relationship to community. I worked across the community — with radio stations, artists and elders. I did an artist talk



Cheryl L'Hirondelle, 270304askiy_jg08.jpg, digital still

for the high-school students. Their willingness to listen and give feedback on how they wanted to engage made me realize just how much the community wanted to participate and collaborate in a very direct way. These encounters ultimately manifested themselves in a performance in which I ran across the reserve while traditional stories related to the performance were broadcast on radio and a website.

Echoes and Transmissions was like condensing all of those different ways of working. Instead of being regimented, we maintained fluidity, so that we could respond to what was going on at the school and in the community. We were learning as we went along; exploring process and media, but definitely not focused on fixed ends.

CH: Across these two projects and others in which you have worked with community, you have used radio. What draws you to this medium, as opposed to other traditional visual formats?

CLH: Radio fit in Morley because it is something that exists at Morley. I had met Margaret and Terry Rider from Morley's Siktoge Ja Radio a few years earlier at the *Aboriginal Streams* workshop at Banff. They were a great connection and thankfully were interested in participating in this project. What I know about reserve radio



Cheryl L'Hirondelle, iamcdn.jpg, digital still

from my time in northern Saskatchewan is that everyone uses it, everyone knows it, everyone honours it. Margaret and Terry run Siktoge Ja as a business, but also as a service for the people. Because my work is process based — more about exploration, collaboration and site specificity and less about visual representation — I like to use what is already there.

I also see this as being about expressing points of view. I often use the analogy of a bird on a branch expressing itself. While that mental image might lead to a visual representation quite easily, for me it is the voice that frames my perspective. Radio is like that bird's song — those who have radio have the ability to voice their point of view. Because I was being asked to think about place, I was thinking about the beautiful valley at Morley and the kinds of echoes that might emanate from there. I was interested in what kinds of transmissions one would make to the land there. Radio was the bridge between what I do and what exists on the reserve.

In the Morley project, I wanted community members and especially the young people to be exposed to the whole open-source and DIY mentality involved in pirate radio; that not everything that is not purchased or licensed for individual use is stolen or illegal.

However, I also wanted draw out some relationships between rez radio and piracy. On reserves in Canada you can broadcast without a license up to about fifty watts, so you do not need to have a CRTC license. This follows from a logic that is present within many Indian communities: the air was not mentioned in treaties so there is no need for it to be the jurisdiction or domain of a Canadian governing body. No one can own the air. So on reserves people don't really think of this as pirate radio. Pirate has a more European connotation. To translate the concept of piracy in *Nehiyawewin* (Cree language) one could say, *naciyaw sikiwak* (to sneak up).

JG: Cheryl, in what you've described there is an obvious interest in moving beyond a visual notion of land (like those indications of jurisdiction and limit found on

maps) and toward the more ephemeral quality of radio that exceeds the reach of these boundaries. When you orchestrated the pirate broadcast from the Morley school, however, you simultaneously placed yourself on a perceived and visible border, on the side of the Trans-Canada highway, an edge of Stoney territory where you tagged messages in Cree syllabics. This political boundary was dissipated by the radio waves that reached beyond but it was also reconstituted by your presence. Was this intentional?

CLH: As Indian people this is our reality. We are partly within a Canadian paradigm, but so much of what we do falls outside of that domain. We are still exploring our freedom of movement, our different connections to land based on this mobility and new forms of communication. From my perspective, language is gauged by the land. For example, *Nehiyawewin*, or Cree language, means the “sounding” of the Cree worldview. This worldview is referenced to where one is situated. Cree dialects change as you move from shield to swamp to plains, from Quebec to BC. Values, lifestyle and point of view also change along the way.

The tagging again reflects my interest in unauthorized youth cultures and subversive activity, the intersections between Indigenous experiences and cultures like

hip-hop. Graffiti, tagging and bombing are meaningful forms of communication. I have been trying to relate this to the existence of pictographs, petroglyphs and early mark-making done by Aboriginal people on the Plains that I heard about from Connie Dieter Buffalo (a writer from Saskatchewan). She once related a story to me about how one of her relatives, her uncle I think, would go into Regina (when Indians were finally being let off reserves without passes) and make marks on buildings that were part English, part symbol, part syllabic. These were little glyphs outside of buildings to send each other messages like: “don’t go here,” “they’ll give you water here,” “you can go into this store,” or “good place to rest.” This was apparently a common practice among hobos, but, in using syllabics, legible only to other Native people in the city. It was a way of communicating with each other in the alienating constructs of the city. When kids are tagging they are also trying to make meaningful messages to each other. I wanted the young people we were working with to understand that tagging, or even the doodles in their notebooks, could operate within a non-authorized artistic space.

JG: And why the side of the highway?

CLH: Ha, ha — what seems like an edge is actually in

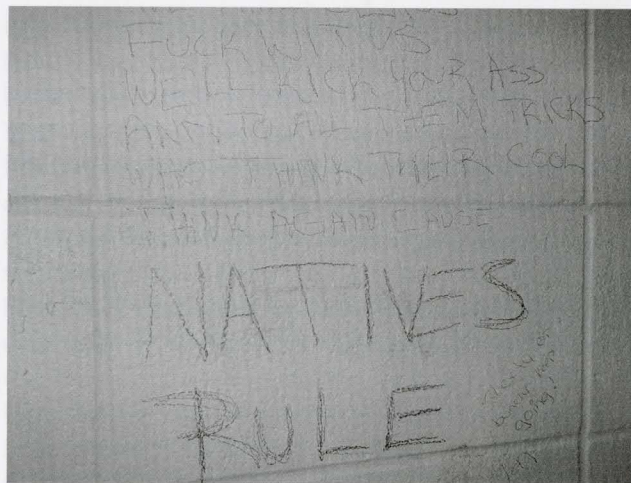
the middle of Stoney territory. I think many people aren’t aware that they are going through reserves on highways all over the land now called Canada. It was fun to be doing performance activities and making marks using syllabics to draw attention to this fact. I have been thinking about the notion of random audiences, without any sense of hierarchy; witnesses who may or may not engage. On the side of the Trans-Canada, there have been these tags, but they are very touristy, messages like “I am Canadian,” and “Ben loves Amy.” Candice has spoken with the writer Maria Campbell in Saskatchewan about the road allowance people. Candice, why don’t you talk about this ...

CH: There were times when Métis people were not living on reserves and didn’t have the means or the right (or in some cases, the will) to purchase land. Groups of Métis people lived on what are called road allowances, the slim strips of land between the road and titled territories. It was essentially “no man’s land.” The space is left in the event that the government wants to alter or expand the highway. I found the story fascinating because of the resilience of people who would build temporary structures that they could leave very quickly. In a sense the land on which they lived also signified their place in society, which was an unresolved border zone.

CLH: My mother was a road-allowance person. If they took script, which disenfranchised them from being Aboriginal, they were entitled to some of the same rights as settlers. But there were all of these stipulations on script. If you didn’t clear the land that you purchased with script money in two years and if it didn’t have a certain number of crops growing on it, you lost it. As a result, Métis people often became rock and root pickers, or tree-stump pickers on what would become pioneer land. They often had neither the money, equipment or lifestyle for farming.

The road allowances often had no roads in them. In many cases they were lands slated for road development, thin strips of land between authorized territories where frequent mobility was the norm. There were times these houses were burned out and would have to be rebuilt.

Occupying this space during the project really spoke to me about who I am. It seemed appropriate that the highway, which was the road allowance of the Morley reserve, was a place for me because of my background. But it was also important for me to acknowledge that I was not from Morley, that I needed to be aware of where I positioned myself. As an artist entering into the Morley community, I could not have prime real estate. I felt, and still feel, that I have to earn a place in the



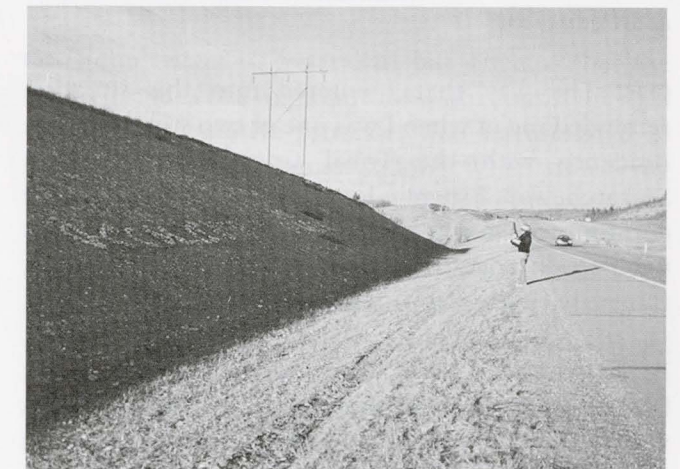
Cheryl L'Hirondelle, *nativesrule_tag.jpg*, digital still



Cheryl L'Hirondelle, *peacelove_tag.jpg*, digital still



Cheryl L'Hirondelle, *stoneyindianreserve.jpg*, digital still



Cheryl L'Hirondelle, *270304askiy_jg01.jpg*, digital still

community. I was honoured to be there. For me, the more derogatory notions — that we are “the good for nothing” living at the side of the road — were replaced with this honour; to be in a position where I was welcomed to make a contribution and a commentary.

JG: Speaking about the “inside” and “outside” places of the reserve and the gallery, I wondered if we could revisit the term outreach that you used at the beginning of the conversation, Cheryl. The way that you both have talked about playing with notions of audience, of community and of governed and autonomous ideas of space, it seems that the standard dichotomy — the inside of the gallery and the outside of the public — was remapped. Did your roles and the language that you used around the project change as a result?

CH: We saw all of our roles as equal. What we brought to the community and what they brought to us had equal value. Cheryl and I saw ourselves as collaborators, with one another and with the community. There wasn't a single author of the project. What I was interested in achieving was not to bring the institution “out” into the community, but to learn from members of the community and, by exhibiting student work within the larger exhibition, to weave their perspectives into the institution, from the inside.

JG: How did this reshape your roles as curator and artist/educator?

CLH: The way that I entered into this situation reminded me of when I was one of two storytellers in residence with the Tribal Council in northern Saskatchewan. I spent a lot of time with elders in the community. They told stories and I tried to figure out what to do with them. I started to realize different things that were going on in the community.

In the Morley project, there were many grey lines: between the piece on the side of the highway that would become net art and our interactions at the school working with kids, bringing in other artists who

could work with us. It got very blurry between the projects and between our roles. It became very relational. When things were discussed or decided upon they had to touch on all of these aspects of the work and we all had a role to play in this. The ability for us to work discursively and to continue to build relationships over a longer period of time, rather than being dropped in for a month, was really important to both of us.

CH: When we started working with community members, we tried to create a different dynamic. We weren't the “art experts,” we wanted to build longer lasting friendships. Since the exhibition has closed we've been invited to round-house dances and sweats. The people in the community don't see us only as representatives of an institution. This is an important point. I don't think that this project would have created lasting relationships if our roles had been defined within the strict terms of the gallery. We came as collaborators.

JG: This shifts the usual temporal parameters of gallery and museum outreach work, extending beyond the length of an exhibition or a set number of workshops negotiated with a teacher. This is very rare in the current neo-liberal climate that both arts and educational institutions operate in, at least in a Toronto context. Was there friction in doing so?



Cheryl L'Hirondelle, *uronndnland.jpg*, digital still

CH: Surprisingly there was not much friction in expanding the usual boundaries, time-based or otherwise. The Morley Community School is a unique environment because of the amount of freedom we had while working within the school and the freedom that we have in continuing this relationship. I think that this stems in part from the different ideologies that exist in the school, both in the way that the students are taught and the idea that culture and identity are at the forefront of the curriculum.

JG: The project's ability to exceed these kinds of institutional boundaries seems to address a critique made of “new genre public art” by people like Miwon Kwon — of artists parachuting into a perceived community to address a social issue over a very short period of time. Beyond the issues of time, you, Cheryl and the commu-

CLH: Years ago I noticed something in the difference between theatre and performance that might help to clarify this. In theatre, if you want people to look at certain gestures enacted on the stage, you use blocking to direct their attention to the right location. In performance it is much more acceptable to believe that, whatever your point of view, it is valid. The way that I could understand this was through my own family gatherings, where my relatives are all musicians: talented jiggers and fiddlers and guitar players. In this context it was just as important to see my uncle stamping his foot to the beat as it was to hear him singing or watch the smooth foot patterns of someone dancing — you saw and enjoyed what you saw. There was a sense of a fuller experience. So this idea in performance art was for me, already part of who I was.

Later I moved to northern Saskatchewan and there were no galleries or clubs for gigs. There were not venues for having a codified art experience, but you could create art and it was all around you. Amazing storytelling happened around kitchen tables, performance was part of everyday. As an artist, your practice becomes very different depending on who is witnessing or interacting with the piece. There, it was very apparent that art making was about building relationships, building a sense of trust. There is a belief that everyone has a gift to share and that you give and share what you have with a community.

CH: I don't want to generalize, but it seems that the modernist idea of a single author is not consistent with the kinds of creative processes that have existed in Aboriginal communities for so long. When art is being created, when stories are being told, it's not necessarily your story. The storyteller is not a singular voice, there are many who take on the story. It is kept alive by sharing and repetition, not necessarily through the celebration of ownership. Thinking about community art from this perspective is very interesting because the idea of collaboration, the loss of the author, is not considered to be avant-garde, but just the way that things are.

date of birth

place of origin/birth

alias/original/chosen name

holder's signature

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another difference with this project is that Cheryl and I didn't go into the community with the idea that we could solve a problem or would even have the capability — or right — to locate what the problems are. Reserves, as with any community, are very complex. I think that the idea of artist as social worker creates a very problematic relationship as it immediately sets up hierarchies between the artist, the curator, the community and the participants. This was exactly what we were trying to disrupt.

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community. I was honoured to be there. For me, the more derogatory notions — that we are “the good for nothing” living at the side of the road — were replaced with this honour; to be in a position where I was welcomed to make a contribution and a commentary.

JG: Speaking about the “inside” and “outside” places of the reserve and the gallery, I wondered if we could revisit the term outreach that you used at the beginning of the conversation, Cheryl. The way that you both have talked about playing with notions of audience, of community and of governed and autonomous ideas of space, it seems that the standard dichotomy — the inside of the gallery and the outside of the public — was remapped. Did your roles and the language that you used around the project change as a result?

CH: We saw all of our roles as equal. What we brought to the community and what they brought to us had equal value. Cheryl and I saw ourselves as collaborators, with one another and with the community. There wasn't a single author of the project. What I was interested in achieving was not to bring the institution “out” into the community, but to learn from members of the community and, by exhibiting student work within the larger exhibition, to weave their perspectives into the institution, from the inside.

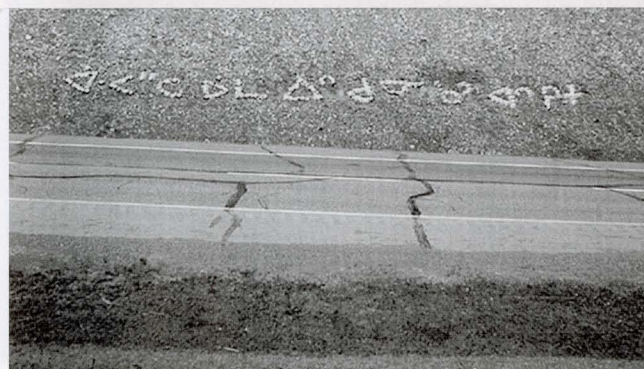
JG: How did this reshape your roles as curator and artist/educator?

CLH: The way that I entered into this situation reminded me of when I was one of two storytellers in residence with the Tribal Council in northern Saskatchewan. I spent a lot of time with elders in the community. They told stories and I tried to figure out what to do with them. I started to realize different things that were going on in the community.

In the Morley project, there were many grey lines: between the piece on the side of the highway that would become net art and our interactions at the school working with kids, bringing in other artists who

could work with us. It got very blurry between the projects and between our roles. It became very relational. When things were discussed or decided upon they had to touch on all of these aspects of the work and we all had a role to play in this. The ability for us to work discursively and to continue to build relationships over a longer period of time, rather than being dropped in for a month, was really important to both of us.

CH: When we started working with community members, we tried to create a different dynamic. We weren't the “art experts,” we wanted to build longer lasting friendships. Since the exhibition has closed we've been invited to round-house dances and sweats. The people in the community don't see us only as representatives of an institution. This is an important point. I don't think that this project would have created lasting relationships if our roles had been defined within the institution.



Cheryl L'Hirondelle, *uronndnland.jpg*, digital still

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JG: The project's ability to exceed these kinds of institutional boundaries seems to address a critique made of “new genre public art” by people like Miwon Kwon — of artists parachuting into a perceived community to address a social issue over a very short period of time. Beyond the issues of time, you, Cheryl and the community are using a very different idea of public culture. How do you describe the notions of public and community that you and your collaborators on the reserve were working with?

CH: I believe that there is a different notion of community arts practice in Aboriginal communities. Art in Aboriginal communities hasn't been defined by terms like new genre public art (coined by Suzanne Lacy), because this kind of art practice isn't something that is new. We are working within a much longer trajectory, from which Cheryl's work generally follows. With this project I was interested in seeing if there was a new definition of community arts practices that might be presented from Aboriginal perspectives. I think that another difference with this project is that Cheryl and I didn't go into the community with the idea that we could solve a problem or would even have the capability — or right — to locate what the problems are. Reserves, as with any community, are very complex. I think that the idea of artist as social worker creates a very problematic relationship as it immediately sets up hierarchies between the artist, the curator, the community and the participants. This was exactly what we were trying to disrupt.

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CLH: Yes! This was the moccasin telegraph, a sense of information being conveyed through the story, of sharing information rather than holding on to it or developing expertise.

CH: Non-linearity and an awareness of intertextuality are things that have always existed in Aboriginal communities.

JG: Was there a tension in trying to work with this non-authorial, non-linear framework (and across jurisdictions, definitions, community sectors, disciplines and factions), even if the roots of this kind of practice run deep within Aboriginal cultures?

CH: There is tension. In Morley things are becoming more and more divided into the three bands: Wesley, Chiniki and Bears paw. It was interesting to work at the school because it was the only place on the reserve where people from all three bands came together. There is no other community meeting-place. The markers dividing each community are very visible, there are signs indicating each band's territory and the divide is coming to a head. Wesley, Chiniki and Bears paw are each in the process of developing their own buildings, structures and infrastructures, like rodeo grounds and elder's houses. Working at the school was a way of working across those tensions, though we were very aware of them.

CLH: Yes, and it was very important to us not to privilege or sensationalize that story within the work and interactions with community. They live with this every day. As Aboriginal people, we live with our tensions and our legacy and we can't escape that. It was important for us to acknowledge this but to also enable experience beyond these tensions.

JG: Candice, your comment on the school as a community meeting-place is very interesting. In speaking with others on the reserve, it seems that there are multiple learning frameworks in place at the Morley school: those developed by elders, that of the Alberta Learning

curriculum and those arising from community happenings and celebrations. Did you sense this as a tension between values or an opportunity to work between them? The Alberta art curriculum, for example, places great emphasis on visual understanding and not on inter-disciplinary work.

CLH: There are tensions around the dominance of the visual in the curriculum. Instead of being oppositional, we worked around this tension. We used other means to look at and experience things.

The school is a space where there is a great deal going on and a lot of things coming together. In previous work I've looked for a narrative, and I did not want that story to be about the tensions. I wanted to do work about other ways of seeing.

By using pirate radio, there was a sense that our activity was meant to fly under the radar. We did not want to become part of the politics. We wanted the project to occupy and replicate the somewhat autonomous space of the school.

JG: This is a very interesting shift in the use of the idea of autonomous space — not just autonomous from the mainstream but also a space for creation and the formation of a meta-community across the individual communities. How will this work continue?

CLH: I think that language will be something that we explore at some point. I find it to be so amazing that the reserve is nestled between the mountain tourism of Banff and the city of Calgary and yet the Nakoda language has been so strongly retained. It's nice to know that this is something to build upon. I have been teasing the students about making some rhymes in Nakoda...

I'd like to end with a question to the two of you, if that's okay. Whether a school, an art gallery or a ministry curriculum — given both of your experiences — are there limits to doing this kind of work within an institutional framework? Can it actually provoke change?

JG: The Morley School seems to have a more flexible program that places values such as care, collaboration and community at the centre of learning. Your ability to weave your way through the school, to improvise curriculum, to involve the young people with whom you worked informally in community and gallery structures is very inspiring. Working in such a committed way within a community runs counter to the service-delivery model of the one-off class visit or exhibition-based outreach program that often happen in gallery-based education. It also speaks to the way in which professional designations and divisions in European-based institutions (for example, between that of curator, artist and educator) do not translate into an Aboriginal or, in fact, any viable community context. This is consistent with progressive thinking that has been happening around museum pedagogy in recent years by people like Eileen Hooper-Greenhill, Declan McGonagle and places like the Gardiner Museum in Toronto.

The Walter Phillips Gallery seems like an ideal place to experiment with this kind of work. In larger galleries the economic demands imposed as part of the steady push to privatize public culture often creates pressure for education departments to become economically self-sustaining or even revenue generating on behalf of the larger institution. This can limit the kinds of community interactions that are possible. In large school boards these kinds of programs are also extremely difficult to realize and even harder to sustain, given the funding pressures and government policy guidelines that are facing both the education and cultural sectors.

CH: I think to participate in these projects you have to always go in with the mindset that change is possible. The degree to which this happens might not be immediately visible. A strategy in this project was to find ways in which we could operate across the limits of an institution — something that you pointed to, Cheryl, in your thoughts on the use of radio in the school. Radio, as you rightly stated, can fly underneath the radar. In regards

to the exhibition, I believe that even exhibiting work by Aboriginal youth in the gallery was a subversive act. They are not artists that would ordinarily be considered within this context. There is so much potential in these communities just waiting to be given space and voice.

Candice Hopkins is the Aboriginal curator in residence at the Walter Phillips Gallery. Her recent curatorial project, Every Stone Tells a Story: The Performance Work of David Hammons and Jimmie Durham, opened at the Berrie Center Art Galleries, Ramapo College NJ in November 2004. Her writing is featured in the periodical <http://www.horizonzero.ca> and the anthology Transference, Tradition, Technology: Native New Media Exploring Visual and Digital Culture to be published by the Walter Phillips Gallery. Hopkins has lectured at the Tate Britain, Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art, Sunderland, UK, Dak'Art Lab, Senegal and in Canada at the Alberta College of Art and Design.

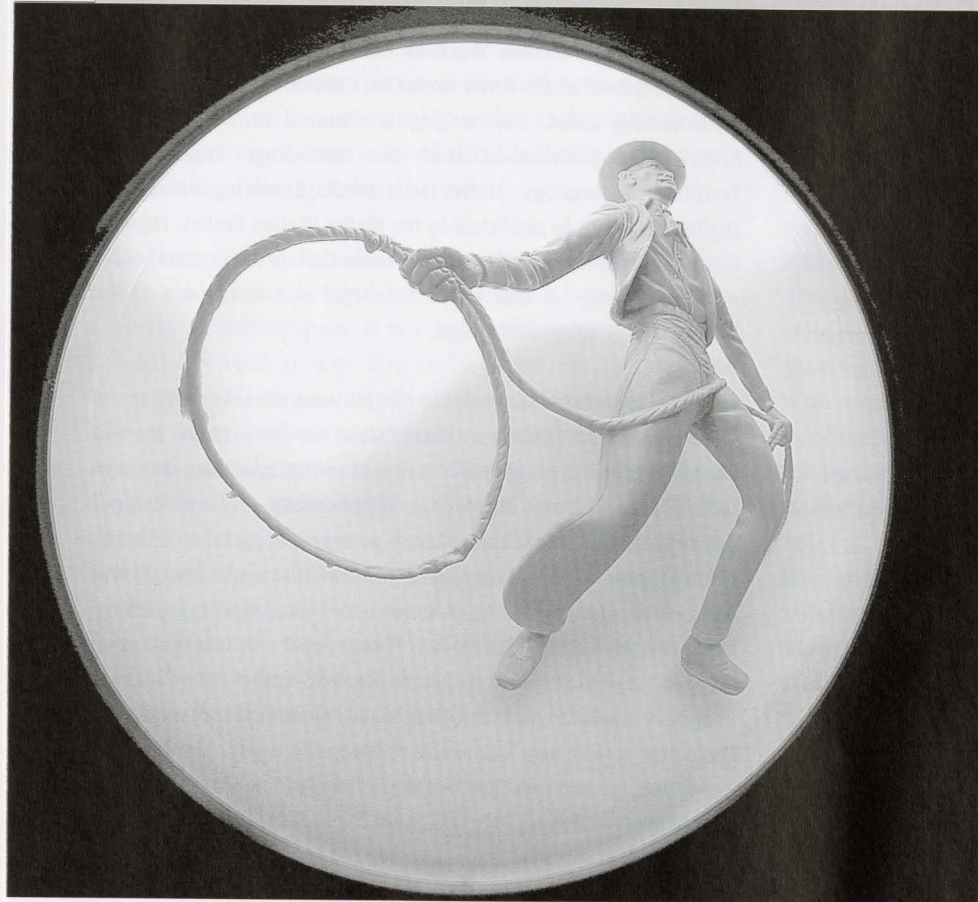
Cheryl L'Hirondelle (waynohtêw) (<http://www.ndnrkey.net>) is an Alberta-born interdisciplinary artist. Since the early 1980s, she has worked as an arts programmer, cultural strategist/activist, arts consultant, producer and director — independently and with various artist-run centres, tribal councils and government agencies. Recently, she was guest creative consultant for horizon zero's (<http://www.horizonzero.ca>) edition 17:TELL devoted to aboriginal digital storytelling. Her net.art database project treatycard (<http://treatycard.banff.org>) is part of Walter Phillips Gallery's November 2004 Database Imaginary exhibition curated by Sarah Cook, Anthony Kiendl and Steve Dietz. Her project, awa ka-amaciwet piwapisko waciya/climbing the iron mountains was presented recently in Toronto in the 7a-11d performance festival.

Janna Graham develops projects in the education department at the Art Gallery of Ontario in collaboration with youth, artists and community organizations. These have included Decked: A Ballet on Skateboards, Audge's Place, an installation by De-Ba-Jeh-Mu-jig Theatre Group and Tauqsijit, a temporary media lab, exhibition and residency with artists from 7th Generation Image Makers, De-Ba-Jeh-Mu-jig Theatre Group, YUMI, Qaggiq and Igloodik Isuma Productions. She has presented at numerous conferences and contributed writing to the Journal of Visual Culture, Feedback: New Curatorial Strategies and a recent book on Knut Asdam. Janna is on the editorial committee at Fuse.

Nostalgic Landscapes — Andrew Hunter's *Giddy-Up! or a Darn Good Hat Act*

Walter Phillips Gallery, Banff, Alberta
3 June – 15 August 2004

review by Ayesha Hameed



William Eakin *Night Rider*, c-print, 2004.
Courtesy: Walter Phillips Gallery

Giddy-Up! or a Darn Good Hat Act is a no-apologies hop-in-the-saddle romp in the semiotics of the old west. Revelling in the imagery of the romantic, solitary cowboy, it creates a landscape furnished with stereotypes that literally flatten the history of the land into a few key cowboy motifs.

Curated by Andrew Hunter, *Giddy-Up!* is an exhibition of cowboy memorabilia and kitsch objects. The installation includes a

black-and-white projection of a horse corral and several framed images of cowboys, both archival and contemporary. Installed on shelves on the wall are a number of self-consciously kitsch objects: lamps in the shape of horses, old vinyl record covers, shot glasses, clocks and calendars. On islands in the middle of the room are a tent decorated with a “cowboy and Indian” design, several chairs stencilled with cowboy silhouettes, old cowboy books for kids (like *Chuck Wagon of the Circle B*), a mannequin dressed in a cowboy shirt, and fabrics printed with the same motifs. On entering the gallery, a visitor can play an old country music record.

The catalogue provides a narrative locus for the installation. Richly illustrated with images from the show, the catalogue contains Hunter's story about Andy, a child living in the suburbs of Hamilton, Ontario, who dreams about being a cowboy after meeting Gibby, his constantly vanishing cowboy neighbour.

The story describes Andy's fascination with Gibby — a fascination that reifies his neighbour as the cowboy, the personification and coalescence of all cowboyness — even though Andy simultaneously suspects that Gibby isn't a cowboy at all. When Gibby vanishes and later steals Andy's backyard tent, Andy seeks traces of him in junk stores and yard sales. When he finds

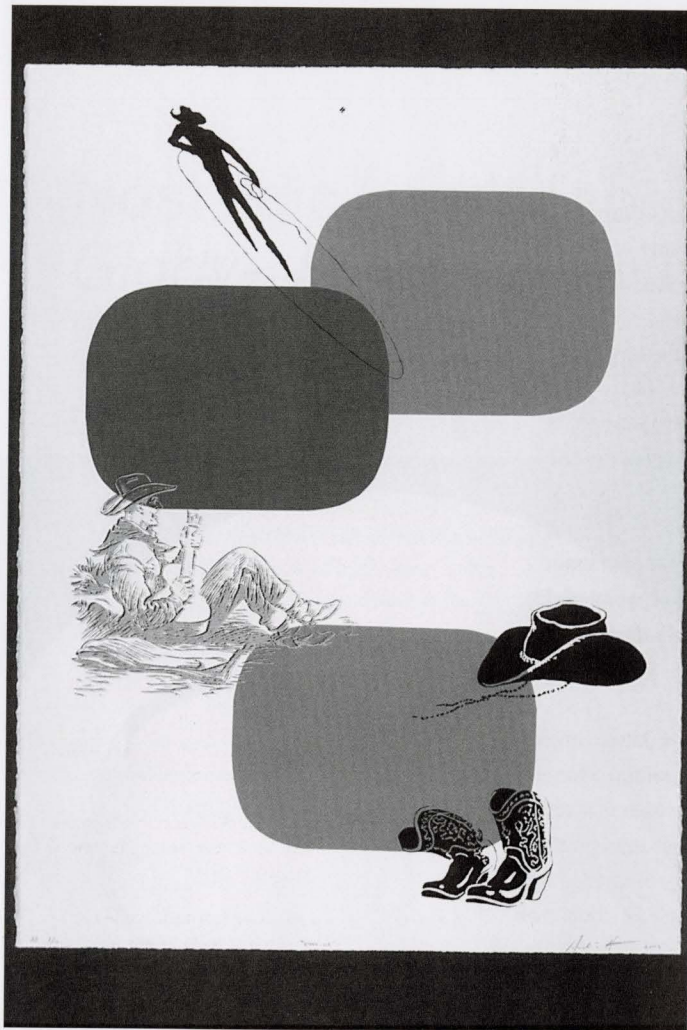
cowboy memorabilia, he sees these as Gibby's possessions and perhaps the essence of Gibby himself. He finds the kitsch objects as far west as Winnipeg and marvels “that Gibby's things would travel as if they had a mind of their own” — seeing this as akin to “stories of ghosts and psychic channelling and aliens.” It is as though Gibby is not only the personification of the idea of the cowboy to the boy, but also that his essence or soul infuses every bit of cowboy kitsch that exists. Gibby is no longer a person, but an abstract idea or object in Andy's eyes. And paradoxically, the relics from the yard sales come alive with his cowboyness. Though they are anonymous, mass produced commodities, they take on the personality of the cowboy. They move of their own accord evoking Marx's account of the occult, animating magic of commodity fetishism that transforms a simple wooden table:

The form of wood, for instance, is altered if a table is made out of it. Nevertheless the table continues to be wood, an ordinary, sensuous thing. But as soon as it emerges as a commodity, it changes into a thing which transcends sensuousness. It not only stands with its feet on the ground, but, in relation to all other commodities, it stands on its head, and evolves out of its wooden brain grotesque ideas far more wonderful than if it were to begin dancing of its own free will.²

By a sleight of hand the kitsch objects form the ultimate commodities. They are mass-produced but nevertheless invested with a nostalgic aura that renders them unique in the narrator/consumer's mind and filled with an agency of their own akin to Marx's table.



Giddy Up! or a Darn Good Hat Act, installation view, 2004,
Courtesy: Walter Phillips
Gallery, Photo: Don Lee



Andrew Hunter, *Giddy Up*, silkscreen on vintage fabric, 2003

In this nostalgic vein, the key index of the installation is temporal. The old calendar, the stopped clocks, the aged books, the scratched vinyl and the worn old record covers evoke a sense of time passed. The colours of each object are immediately retro, with large geometrical patterns of orange, brown and white dominating the room. The instant impression is of nostalgia, because the moment that is marked as the heyday of the cowboy has passed. But not only that: the moment of nostalgia, embodied in the vintage clocks that have stopped, is also of the past. In essence, the installation seems to mourn the passing of the moment of nostalgia itself.

In marking the landscape of the room with the landscape of the old, wild west,

Giddy-Up! is also a spatial gesture, a charged rewriting of the history of the landscape of the Rockies, an inscription of its landmarks. Buried under several layers of nostalgia, *Giddy-Up!* stakes out a specific narrative of what this land means — and what it means to remember — that systematically absorbs and whitewashes other mappings and histories.

Anne McClintock talks about how the colonial process of erasing the populace and clearing the land in the colonial imaginary is in the same gesture an erasing and whitewashing of the violence of colonial incursion on the land and its inhabitants.³ This is a reconfiguration of the land by the colonizers to erase any sort of dissonance that the real space may pose in the subjugation and empire building of these other shores. This is done, McClintock argues, by redefining colonies as inhabiting an anterior time, of defining the spaces as primitive to such an extent that traveling towards them becomes time travel into the past. In this time travel a path is traced along the land and a specific narrative is created which silences all others. In *Giddy Up!*, however, the other narratives are not even carefully silenced. Images of the “Indian,” with all of their stereotypical accoutrements, are scattered around the installation. The depictions of Indians on the tent (in one corner, an Indian stands tall and wise, while at the margins, nearly off the tent, another Indian is strangling a cowboy) are meant to be absorbed or neutralized by nostalgia. The kitsch landscape and iconography makes this nostalgia ironic and so we are presumed to be able to revisit these stereotypes under the mantle of cynical humour.

The story in the catalogue repeats this



Fireside Storytelling with Andrew Hunter and William Eakin, Courtesy: Walter Phillips Gallery, Photo: Don Lee

gesture: the tone — both tragic and ironic, both fictional and possibly autobiographical — creates, in its ambivalent voice, a self-awareness of its own kitsch that is inextricable from its insistence of mourning and nostalgia. The story concludes with an obviously camp reprisal, where a nearly adult Andy sees Gibby fatally beaten in a barroom brawl. As Gibby lays dying, Andy steals into his apartment and finds his own childhood tent, but also all of Gibby’s cowboy collection: a chair, a hat and an ashtray. Andy takes them away, leaving Gibby to die.

Temporally, though, the story ends in the beginning few pages of the catalogue where Andy describes how he plans to take the objects he has collected to install at Banff:

a place that once saw itself as a cowboy town with the Trail Riders of the Canadian Rockies and their singing cowboy Wilf Carter, a transplanted *Bluenoser* who, like Hank Snow and Anne Murray, would turn country. “Hat acts” they call them in country music circles. Not country on the inside, just on the outside, in their costumes and the play lists they adopt.⁴

The “hat act” that Andy celebrates is precisely the revalorization of the meaningless and the kitsch, the hollow and the fake. And if the installation has a tone of regret behind its irony, it nonetheless performs its own hat act in erasing histories of Banff and the land, because these histories always fall outside the nostalgic narrative. Ironic regret erases all histories other than the colonial fiction of the cowboy: the histories of First Nations who have used Banff as a meeting and a spiritual centre, the histories of colonial violence, of indentured Chinese labour that built the railway, of migration and internment.

If the first incursions into the land by European colonizers were conceived as journeys into the past, then the land wiped clean of history becomes a clean slate for rewriting at one instant and a site of fantasy in another, where laws of the present moment cease to apply. The space of the gallery as reconstituted landscape replicates these two gestures: its two orders of nostalgia create the space to rewrite history at one instance, and absolve the viewer of the need to be critical in that nostalgic moment. Criticality is for the present: hats and gloves off when you travel into the past.

Notes

1. Andrew Hunter & William Eakin, *Giddy-Up! Or a Darn Good Hat Act: A Project by Andrew Hunter with special guest William Eakin* (Banff: Walter Phillips Gallery Editions, 2004), unpaginated.
2. Karl Marx, *Capital Volume 1: A Critique of Political Economy*, Introduced by Ernest Mandel and translated by Ben Fowkes (London: Penguin Books, 1990), 163 – 164.
3. Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Context* (New York & London: Routledge, 1995), p.30ff.
4. Hunter.

Ayesha Hameed is a board member at Fuse magazine and a graduate student of Social and Political Thought at York University where she writes on new media work that references the Black Atlantic.

The Abolition of Copyright and other Daring Imaginations — Joost Smiers

Arts Under Pressure: Promoting Cultural Diversity in the Age of Globalization

Zed Books: London and New York: 2003.

review by Meera Sethi

Arts Under Pressure opens up a kaleidoscope of questions about the future of diversity and democracy in the arts. Joost Smiers, professor of political science of the arts at Utrecht School of the Arts in the Netherlands, has written a heartfelt and far-reaching book that delves deep into corporatization and the threatened erasure of artistic diversity across the globe.

Focusing on the impact of economic globalization on artists, cultural producers and the infrastructure that supports them, Smiers begins by establishing the arts as a highly charged “arena of struggle” where “emotional incompatibilities, social conflicts and questions of status collide in a more concentrated way than happens in daily communication.” In other words, “those specific forms of human communication [that] mould our mental framework, our emotional texture, our language, our tonal and visual landscape, our understanding of past and present, our feelings about other people, our sensibility.” By providing examples and characterizing artistic practices the world over, Smiers attests to the many ways in which the arts are integral to communication. It is through the arts, Smiers says, that we derive pleasure, knowledge, harmony, entertainment and unique occasions for reflection. The arts, he argues, give us a place to reflect on our lives.

While not always thoroughly, Smiers pulls together examples from many creative industries including film, television, dance, drama, visual arts and design, addressing the impact of corporate globalization on these. For example, Smiers points to the increasing monopolization of the visual-arts market where only a small number of “art stars” are allowed entry into the “open” market or private gallery system so as to protect the high prices paid for art. As a result, only a tiny percentage of artists receive public attention for their work, while the majority struggle for artistic and financial recognition.

At first reading, this panning across the globe appears to lack the necessary details to get a handle on any one practice. However, as the book progresses, two things become apparent: first, that Smiers is so excited by this subject matter that he does not know where to elaborate and where to edit, and second, that Smiers is taking the book as an opportunity to set the stage for the penultimate chapter titled “Freedom and Protection,” where he outlines proposals for broad cultural change.

Globalization is a catchall Smiers rightfully attempts to define. He focuses on explaining globalization as uneven economic growth accompanied by an enormous rise in transglobal trade including

the transfer of labour, goods, capital and information technology. Smiers is careful to relativize this concept by identifying “a triangle and a hi-tech archipelago” occupied by the three big powers, the United States, Europe and Japan, where economic activity is clustered. This system is further structured through the World Trade Organization (WTO), the earlier General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and the subsequent International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank structural-adjustment programs. In keeping with neoliberal ideology, economic “reforms” under these organizations are set out to

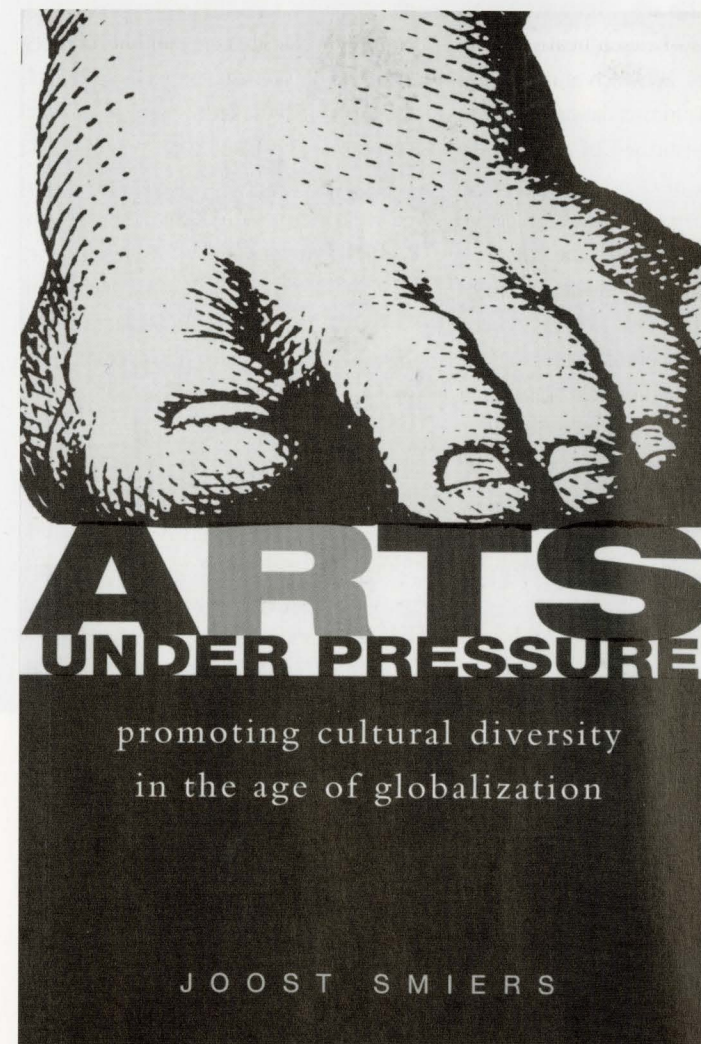
make international trade rules that are in favour of their stakeholders.

To Smiers and to many others involved in the anti-globalization movement, the six principles of globalization (digitalization, competition, liberalization, anti-state-regulation, and privatization) are largely responsible for devastating local businesses and economies, losses of lives and livelihoods, and environmental and cultural destruction (particularly of First Nations and Third World countries). Smiers suggests that it is incumbent upon us to ensure that along with all this

destruction, a diversity of artistic expressions does not also vanish. Pointing out that the WTO and GATT as yet have a “blank page on culture,” Smiers is agitating for international action to create measures that sustain the growth of cultural diversity across boundaries of race, class, gender and nation before it is too late. Now is the time to organize, he says.

Smiers also weighs in on the debate over copyright. Is copyright beneficial to artists and designers or is it an outdated concept? Are we being duped by large cultural conglomerates into believing that copyright protects *our* interests as creators of culture? Smiers certainly thinks so. In fact, he calls for the abolition of copyright altogether, suggesting that large corporations have a monopoly over copyright, patents and other intellectual property rights. Cultural producers, Third World countries and First Nations have long been positioned to lose the race toward intellectual property.

A little-explored but insightful aspect of *Arts Under Pressure* is Smiers’ drawing together of cultural diversity and the environmental movement. There is a need, he argues, to develop a broad-based cultural movement akin to the environmental movement, which is already steeped in the struggle against copyright and corporate control. Intellectual property rights through patents and copyright are big business for mega-corporations delving into environmental and cultural arenas. In this regard, Indian environmental activist Vandana Shiva writes that the “dominant interpretation of Intellectual Property Rights leads to a dramatic distortion in the understanding of creativity, and as a result, in the understanding of the history of inequality.” Shiva and Smiers share a



Calling all Co-conspirators — Julie Andreyev's *Greenroom*

Surrey Art Gallery 17 April – 25 July, 2004
Emily Carr Institute Media Gallery 13 June – 25 July, 2004
<http://greenroom.info>

review by Penny Leong Browne

vision of creativity where biodiversity and artistic diversity are held in the public domain and easily accessible to all peoples, not just those with economic power. To this end, Smiers calls for a joining of environmental biodiversity struggles with struggles for local and global cultural diversity. He notes, however, that "such a coalition should not be based on trying to establish a uniformity of taste; instead, ensuring the necessary conditions for cultural as well as ecological diversity should be the focus."

Smiers also addresses delocalization and the problematic position of the arts in the local context. To ensure cultural diversity, democracy and "an active process of involvement in cultural matters" is a key element. "From the democratic perspective," Smiers says, "it is desirable that major parts of the local artistic landscape are related to what is going on in [a] particular society." As a result of delocalization and the aggressive distribution of American cultural products, artistic representations and cultural expressions are increasingly homogenous across the world. Smiers insists on the need to safeguard local artistic practices that communicate local concerns. We need to create and keep alive spaces for free expression and the exchange of ideas that reflect our most immediate needs and desires, albeit with an awareness of the global.

Far from limiting the global flow of cultural products and ideas, Smiers is an advocate of local and global diversity where the stories and cultural products of the working class, rural communities, people of colour, First Nations and the poor across the world are shared. The delocalization of social, political, economic and cultural life through the massive infiltra-

tion of the cultural products of economic globalization, particularly American cultural products, leads to the destruction of a diversity of voices. When "something to tell" or communication through the arts solely becomes "something to sell," there is an extensive problem.

By far the most interesting, passionate and well-written chapter is "Freedom and Protection." In it Smiers sketches ways in which we can begin to tackle the tremendous rise of corporate oligopoly and mass commercialization of the arts. In a plea for non-commercial communicative spaces, Smiers writes: "the arts – however entertaining they may be – educate us and present registers in which our feelings develop. These communication processes should not be disturbed by commercial messages." Thus, he calls for the development of protective forces that can create "conditions that may open the way for a cultural turn-around worldwide, in favour of the artistic life that belongs to the places and communities where people live, raise their children, eat, drink and unavoidably die." Smiers suggests these conditions could be created with the aid of concepts such as the "corporate charter," "global governance," an "international convention on cultural diversity" (<http://www.incd.net>), "trust-busting" and "state intervention."

In the end, it is our public domain that requires protection from the forces of cultural conglomerates. Some of the protective measures that Smiers describes are already in use in Canada, including arms-length state funding, and respect for ethnic diversity and publicly owned cultural organizations. But with such geographic, economic, ideological and cultural proximity to the us, we still have

much about which to be concerned.

As a Canadian reader, admittedly, my understanding of diversity was limited to the differences between cultures, whether they be ethnic, religious, class, gender or sexual differences. Smiers conceptualizes diversity as the many general and specific cultural differences across the globe whereby not only artistic goods and values are aesthetically varied, but individuals and collectives construct for themselves stable identities that reflect their social and cultural surroundings. From a perspective that takes into account the exigencies of globalization, I see that while paying such close attention to local cultural diversity, we may be losing sight of the broader challenges of developing a global cultural movement that fosters awareness of the fragility and resilience of culture and that creates a necessity in us to take care of our cultural environment. It seems at times that in Western cultures, we forget the essential and integral role art plays in shaping our social struggles, everyday lives and accompanying "structures of feeling."

Much of *Arts Under Pressure* outlines the many ways in which the creative commons, cultural diversity and public domain are increasingly under threat from mass corporatization and delocalization. This book is an eye-opener. With it I realize the extent of the crisis we're in. As with anything else of value, cultural diversity and freedom of artistic communication demand effort. Part naïve and part visionary, Smiers is at times frustrating to read. How can we even imagine the end of cultural copyrights? Smiers does. And I believe imagination is the first step.

Meera Sethi is a graphic designer, writer and educator living and working in Toronto.

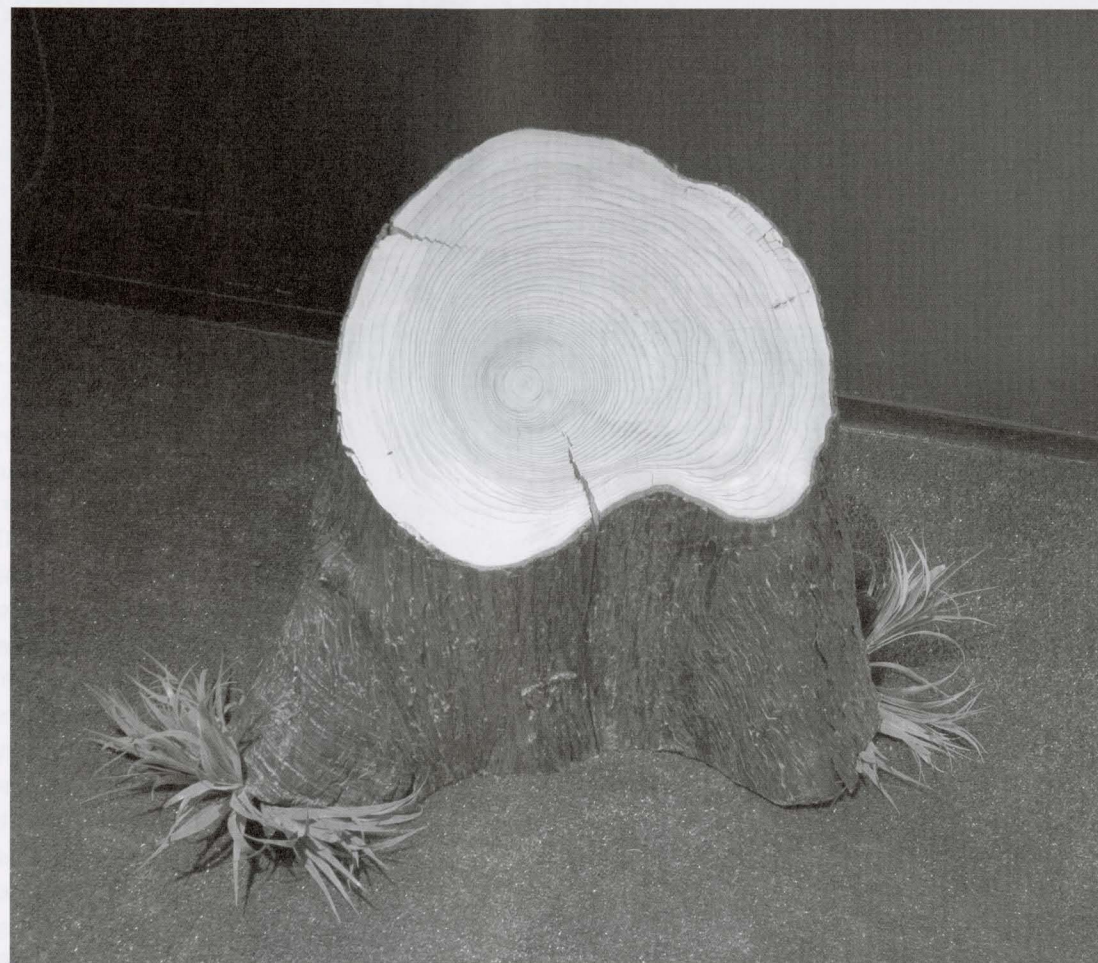


All images this review are Julie Andreyev, *Greenroom*, installation view, 2004, Courtesy: Penny Leong Browne

In theatre, a greenroom serves as a transition space where performers prepare before going on stage. The space signifies a period of being in between the reality of life and the performance of the stage. In Julie Andreyev's *Greenroom*, a similar transition occurs through a portal that launches gallery visitors into a new role. By passing through the portal, a gateway monitored by sensors, observers become performers and a visitor's involvement expands from an act of passive consumption to active participation.

With *Greenroom*, Julie Andreyev has created virtual landscapes through interactive mock park environments called "parcs," by projecting live video of real parks onto walls in two remote interactive rooms. Vancouver's Emily Carr Institute Media Gallery hosted a projection of a waterfront park on Granville Island, while the Surrey Art Gallery TechLab hosted a projection of Bear Creek Park in Surrey BC.

Each of the two parcs features a real-time closed-circuit video feed within which sensors are triggered by and respond to a visitor's presence. This causes visitors to modify the projected space by moving their bodies. If a person moves closer to the projected image, there is greater magnification. Another movement may trigger the image to degrade in resolution or



even fragment, exposing a layer of imagery underneath. A camera located in the parc projects the manipulations onto the window of each gallery, making the interventions visible to the public outside. Participants see themselves integrated into virtual space as if they are "inside" the image and, in turn, are invited to meditate on the existence of their own bodies in projected images.

The interplay of visitor's actions and video imagery is simultaneously transmitted to the parc installed at the other gallery through a live video feed and high-speed Internet connection. When people enter the portal, they trigger a transformation of the local image into

the remote image or the projected image of the other parc's live video. What results is a mirroring and layering of the virtual and manipulated realities of live park imagery and a participant's interventions. Perceptions are challenged as participants in each parc are confronted with an alternate layer of images.

The theatrical quality of each of these spaces is amplified by pre-recorded audio of birds chirping as well as real and artificial objects that serve as physical and iconic references to a park. A tree stump and a pond constructed from a sheet of Plexiglass lend a physicality to the exhibit that encourages further interaction with the space and contributes to

the immersive experience of the exhibit. Both objects provide a tension between reality and artificiality, the exhibit's central challenge to our visual and audio perceptions. The tree stump in the parc at Emily Carr references the natural through exposed growth rings while the varathane coating ironically gives it an impression of artificiality. Likewise, the pond mirrors the shifting visuals and also references the artificiality of the space. Like a real pond, the *Greenroom* pond confirms the rules of physics, reflecting light and shape. Yet, we know it is not real.

Greenroom visitors are an integral part of an experience that is presented as virtual

recreation. They are welcome to play, walk and socialize as they would in an urban park. The complexity of this arrangement, as Andreyev points out, lies with an identification of the parc as "landscape" or what Petra Watson defines as "nature transformed," in this case, a virtual environment designed for leisure activity.¹ By playing within these spaces and physically interacting with the video imagery, we become "mobile agents" or co-conspirators.²

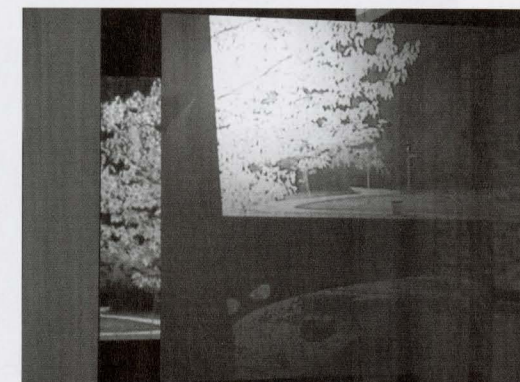
By moving our arms or approaching the video imagery, we as participants interrupt and modify it. Visitors' interventions, in turn, are recorded in digital photographs or web video postcards accessed from the *Greenroom* website. Although they remind us of souvenir tourist or recreational photos, in this context they serve as evidence that someone was in the park. As creators, our personal contribution to *Greenroom* is documented and therefore proven, causing the tension between reality and artifice to resurface. Through the exhibit, our bodies serve as interface to the virtual park, causing our physical acts to perform reality checks; undisputed facts that are fused within the projected spaces, producing a paradox of the real. To deny the factual existence of the projected park would be to simultaneously deny our presence in the image.

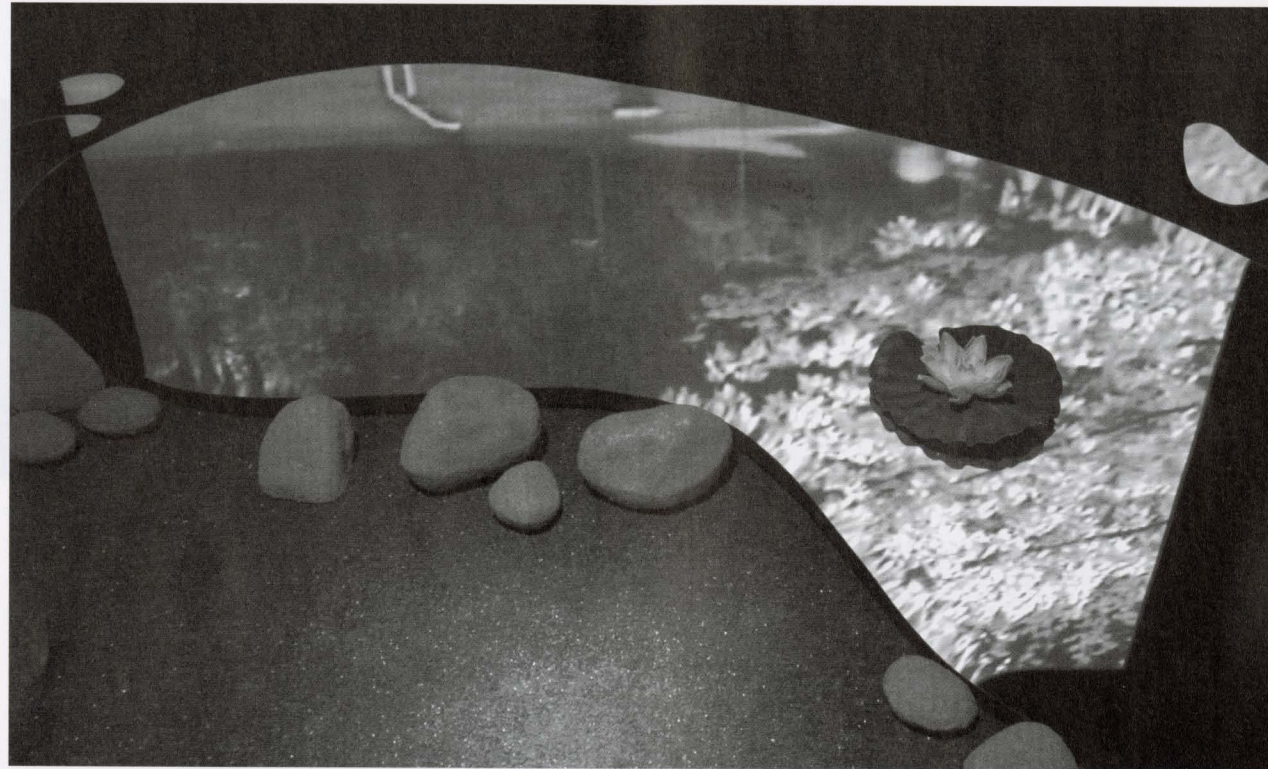
Andreyev considers using the body as physical intermediary an opportunity to reconnect to our physical selves in an age of increasingly virtual and digital immersion:

There seems to be renewed interest in how to revitalize the virtual and one of the ways to explore that is to bring it back into the physical environment so that we don't lose connection to the rest of ourselves, not just our vision, our cognition skills

like when you're surfing the net in a virtual environment. It involves actually being able to understand that an image can affect how we physically feel, and remembering that we have something attached from the neck down. I mean, this project is not really just about communication, it's also about how can I use my body to change reality ...³

Andreyev acknowledges early video artist Dan Graham as a significant influence in *Greenroom*. Graham is among a group of pioneering video artists such as Bruce Nauman and Michael Snow who explore perception by incorporating the viewer as co-conspirator into their work. Graham's video installations also rely on participation and challenge viewer's perception of the real. Andreyev's use of mirroring, reflection and performance parallels Graham's works such as *Present Continuous Past(s)* (1974) where glass, mirrors and video monitors are used to produce ambiguities between physical and illusory space. Viewers are invited to stand in front of mirrors and video monitors that reflect and reproduce their images. Observing their self-image in both the mirror and video screen they are challenged to question which is real.⁴





In *Greenroom*, the incorporation of telepresence further persuades visitors to adopt the role of co-conspirators. Visitors to *Greenroom* walk through a portal to “meet” and “interact” with one another in a common meta-space. Telepresence occurs when participants from each corresponding location see each other in the projected spaces. These projections become multi-dimensional spaces where participants in each parc can see not only themselves and their own modifications to the image of the local park but also participants in the other parc and their sensor-produced manipulations. A mirroring effect results in a further confounding of perception.

Andreyev is very interested in exploring how our perception shifts between physical and two-dimensional spaces:

... We're less focused on just having one's own self represented in another space as a solitary experience but more interested in having a perceptual shift occur when you see yourself in relation to another person that's in another space. So, it's a rethinking about perception and what happens when you see yourself in a physical environment, and then in an imagistic environment, in a two-dimensional environment.⁶

Through the use of video projection, interactive and Internet technologies, artists like Andreyev are creating installation works that construct and explore shifting perceptions of the real. By positioning visitors as participants they further confound and challenge perceptions, while launching the viewer out of their

role as passive observer and into the role of co-conspirator.

Notes

1. See Petra Watson's essay, "Perceptions of Landscape and The Mobile Observer" in *Julie Andreyev Greenroom* exhibition catalogue (Surrey Art Gallery, 17 April – 24 July 2004).
2. Liane Davison, curator of the Surrey Art Gallery, uses the term "mobile agents" to refer to Greenroom participants. See Davison's introduction to the exhibition catalogue.
3. Excerpted from an online interview with Julie Andreyev about *Greenroom*, <http://greenroom.info>.
4. See Michael Rush, *Video Art*. (Thames & Hudson, 2003), p.79.
5. See note 3.

Penny Leong Browne is a writer and multidisciplinary artist whose work explores displacement, conflicting selfhood and altered states and realities. She is currently studying at the Emily Carr Institute of Art, Design and Media.

Race-ing Halifax: How to Avoid Being “Big C” Colonial

Short Fuse by Michelle Jacques

Dear C Magazine:

I haven't been able to stop thinking about the Letter from Halifax that Emily Vey Duke wrote for your Fall 2004 issue. As a Torontonion who had just returned from two years living and working in Halifax, when I read in your promotional materials that Emily would be sharing her impressions of the Halifax art scene, I was looking forward to the article with anticipation. I'd put a lot of time into trying to develop an understanding of the complexities of that town. I feel like I had gotten close by the time I left, and was looking forward to knowing whether Emily, who moved to Halifax to be the director of the Khyber Centre for the Arts shortly after I moved back to Toronto in the spring, shared any of my views.

I worked at an artist-run centre in Halifax also – the Centre for Art Tapes (CFAT). It's a media production and presentation centre that has been around for twenty-five years. As a black person who has lived most of my life in the surrounds of a big multicultural city, moving to Halifax – with its complex histories and their continual influence on racial relations today – was a bit of a shock. I loved being at CFAT though, because it was a place where we could do some real work to begin to deal with some of these problems. We had many fantastic production programs that enabled us to begin to democratize access to the necessary means for making art, like the scholarship program, which gave access and training to a diverse group of first-time artists; and Video to Go, a project that paired professional media artists with community groups like the Kitpu Youth Group at the Mi'kmaq Native Friendship Centre, or Leave Out Violence (LOVE), an organization that worked with youth who had experienced violence in their lives.

As Emily has recognized, there are some real inequities to be overcome in Halifax (and realistically in many other places also). As people involved in artist-run culture, we cannot lose sight of this goal. Emily noted that “at its worst Artist-Run Culture...feels [to her] like a Frankenstein monster stitched out of the offal of the white middle class, which has as its sole aim the distribution of money to people who would get money anyway.” That artist-run culture, as a whole, is dominated by the white middle-class is probably an inarguable point. However, there are many artist-run centres and organizations that are committed to doing effective work toward a real democratization of the arts. I've been lucky to be involved with these kinds of artist-run organizations. Or maybe it's wasn't luck that got me involved with them but a conscious effort to connect myself. The urgency of the politics of race is something that many of us have been committed to for a very long time.

That said, the racial climate in Halifax is something I could never get used to.

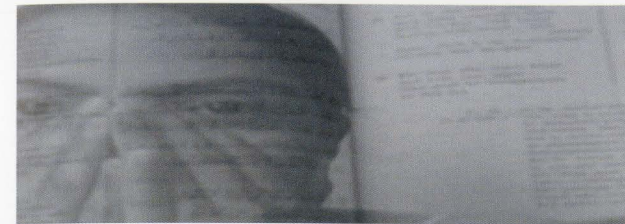
After living in Toronto, a multicultural and fairly integrated city, the strict divides and racial tensions of Halifax were a shock. When these kinds of issues are based on long histories and deep-rooted intolerances, as they are in Nova Scotia, they are, to my mind, the most difficult to overcome. However, while Halifax's racial divisions undeniably plague the arts community just as they do the broader community, I came into contact with many artists from different backgrounds who were open to and eager for collaboration and exchange. The Black Artists Network of Nova Scotia (BANNS) is an excellent organization that is very interested in collaborating with other local arts groups. Maybe a BANNS/Khyber joint project would address Emily's worry about being "the capital C (for colonial) Curator looking for the elusive, enigmatic artist on the social margins."

Even though I lived in Halifax's North End, since my .skin colour didn't give me away as a sign of gentrification I'm not in a position to question Emily's observations about white artists not being welcome by the area's black residents. However, I do have to wonder about Emily's contextualization of the story of her friend Ryan's mugging by three "bloodthirsty" youths (at least two of whom were black, as Emily notes) within an adversarial black residents/white artists framework. From Emily's recounting of the assailants' interrogation of Ryan - "Hey man, you drunk?...You got any money for us?" - and the fact that they took his Walkman and wallet, it seems pretty clear that they were primarily interested in robbing an easy target. I don't get the impression that it was part of a mission to run all the white artists out of the neighborhood.

There is no excuse for what those kids did to Ryan. I suppose the silver lining to this horrible event is that it has made Emily aware of the urgency of the racial situation and her ability to contribute to the solutions. But I'm worried about the direction in which she's headed right now. The assumptions that Emily makes based on this incident - that white artists are not welcome in the North End, that Halifax has no black middle class, that black artists in Halifax function in the social margins - are precisely the kinds of generalizations that perpetuate the inequalities and prejudices she says she recognizes. And in stating that she has "to act different in a way that keeps Black teens out of jail," isn't she presuming that she holds a great deal of power over the black community and its future? Isn't that redolent of the very constructs of colonialism that Emily seems to want to rise above?

It's not a bad thing at all that Emily's recent experiences in Halifax have politicized her and made her cognizant of the complexities of social relations and her role in them. However, she is making some sweeping generalizations that only serve to perpetuate the very injustices she is being critical of. Once Emily more clearly analyzes things and puts some work into coming up with ways to meaningfully connect to the black (arts) community in Halifax, I'll look forward to hearing her observations about the art scene.

Sincerely,
Michelle Jacques



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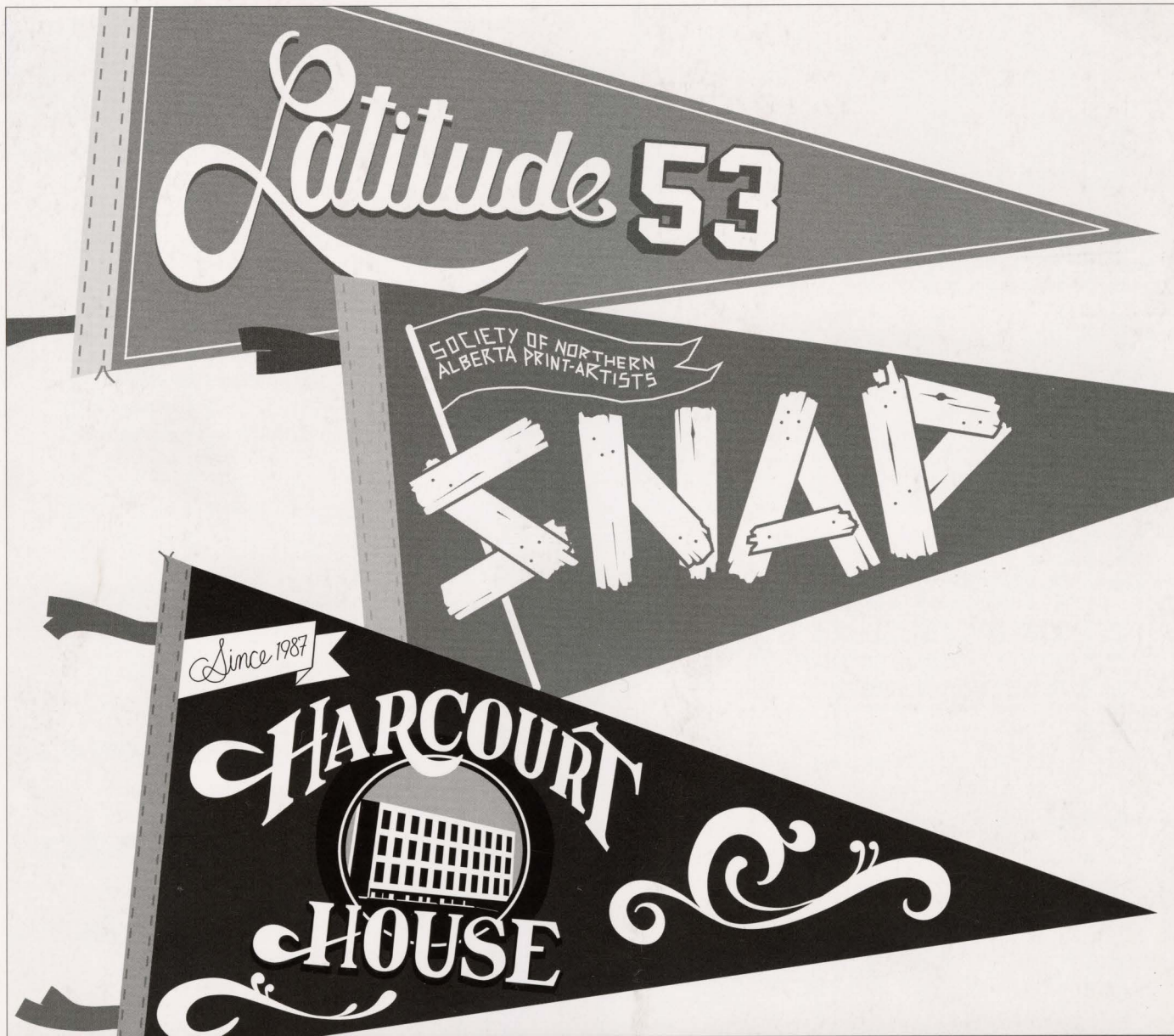
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