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FUSE

MAGAZINE

Black w/Holes

by M. Nourbese Philip

María Fernández on digital imperialism

Laura Marks looks at Inuit TV and southern reception

Jimmie Durham speaks — the sequel

Artists' pages by Michelle Gay and Brent Cehan

Catherine Elwes on new British video

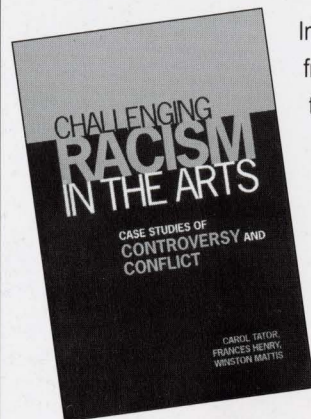
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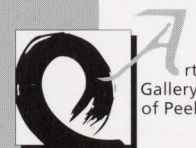
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Convergence is the second in a series of exhibitions (the first was Up North) created by artist/curator Andrew Hunter. Known for his hybrid exhibitions that merge art, literature and pop culture, Hunter merges the stories of the greatest hockey goalie of all time, Terry Sawchuk and the great American painter, Jackson Pollock.

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n.=noun para=beyond
doxa=accepted opinion

exploring the paradoxes between feminist theory
and contemporary women's art practices

Vol 1 Feminism/Postfeminism	Jan 1998
Vol 2 Women and New Media	July 1998
Vol 3 Body Space and Memory	Jan 1999
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August 15 to October 4, Gairloch Gallery
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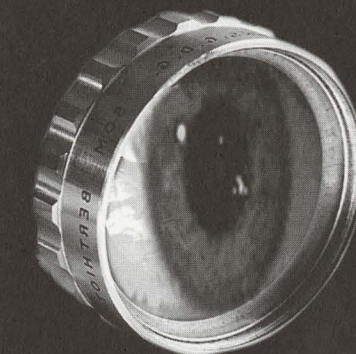
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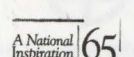
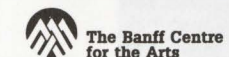
October 16, 1998 - January 3, 1999

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8 Editorial

Columns

13 INUIT AUTEURS AND ARCTIC AIRWAVES
Questions of southern reception
by Laura U. Marks

19 AS ALTERNATIVE AS YOU WANT ME TO BE
Nostalgia
by Susan Kealey

21 RE: ARTIST-RUN CENTRES
by Reid Shier

24 FROM SILENT COMEDY
TO DELIRIUM IN THE LANDSCAPE
A partial view of current British video
by Catherine Elwes

Artists' Projects

9 ARTIST PAGE
by Brent Cehan

54 ERROR CODE
by Michelle Gay



Cover of *Super Shamou* comic book.
Courtesy the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation.

contents

VOLUME 21 NUMBER 4 Fall 1998

Features

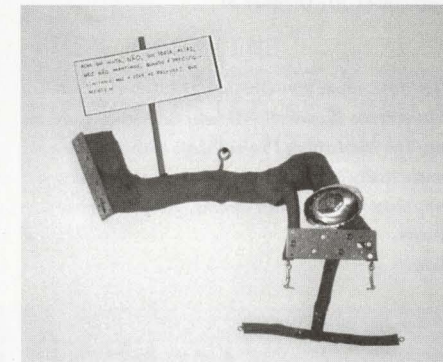
27 BLACK W/HOLES
A History of Brief Time
by M. Nourbese Philip

37 DIGITAL IMPERIALISM
by María Fernández

Interview

46 JIMMIE DURHAM
The Centre of the World is Several Places (Part II)
with Beverly Koski & Richard William Hill

Cover photo by Si Si Peñeloza



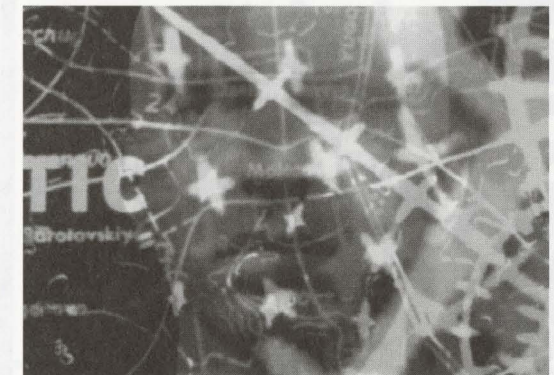
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other; when precision limits us we use words that lie for
us." (José Saramago, translated by Maria-Therese Alves),
Jimmie Durham, sculpture, 1995.

Reviews

56 THE MAGNIFYING EYE OF ANDY WARHOL
The Warhol Look / Glamour Style Fashion
Review by Rosa Berland

59 SU RYNARD
Life Tests
Review by Earl Miller

61 COUNTERPOSES
Re-concevoir le tableau vivant
Review by Stephen Horne



Still from *Eight Men Called Eugene*,
Su Rynard, 16 mm, 1996, 12 min.

LUCA BUVOLI, COLIN CAMPBELL, THIRZA CUTHAND, GEOFFREY FARMER
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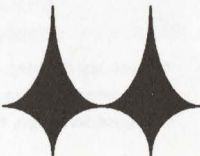
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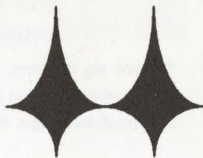
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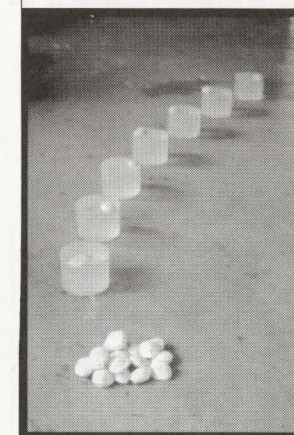
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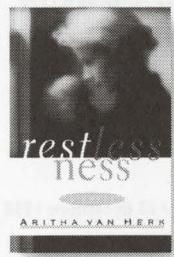
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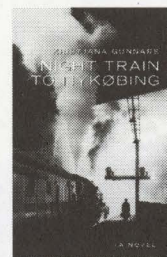
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The situation of magazine funding in the province of Ontario is about to go through a drastic change of face. Tory-appointed OAC president Hal Jackman recently announced the elimination of the multi-disciplinary magazine category, thereby limiting support to those that focus on poetry, fiction and art criticism. This move jeopardizes funding to *Borderlines*, *This Magazine*, *Canadian Forum*, *Aboriginal Voices*, *Queens Quarterly* and *Public*. The impact on FUSE is unclear. At a recent meeting (24 September 98) with representatives of the CMPA (Canadian Magazine Publishers Association), Mr. Jackman expressed the belief that many of the magazines currently occupying the place we call "alternative" cover "culture" as opposed to "art." Jackman described some of those affected as "current affairs" magazines. He continually posed the question: why should the taxpayers and the OAC fund current affairs magazines? A mutually exclusive distinction between culture and art is retrograde and out of touch with artistic and academic practice. It is precisely in the ruins of this rigid, Eurocentric notion of high art that the work of Aboriginal artists and artists of colour, of feminist and queer artists, has flourished in the last decades. Magazines such as FUSE have played a central role in this revival.

At the OAC-CMPA meeting, Jackman refused to discuss his distinction between art and culture. Instead, he insisted that the "new" criteria represented an earlier version of the OAC's criteria. He was dismayed, he reported, that some of the magazines currently funded made it in under the old criteria, which he proceeded to read aloud. Jackman suggested that the private sector would serve the magazines much better than government grants. Another Jackman initiative is to compromise the long-standing tradition of peer assessment in Canadian arts funding with the introduction of the "volunteer" community (corporate sector) in adjudication committees for arts organizations. The conservative corporatist agenda aims to reduce the role of government support for health, education and

cultural funding, cutting taxes paid by the corporate sector and the wealthy. It is more than apparent that the OAC's "new" criteria are meant to stifle voices that counterpoint this agenda.

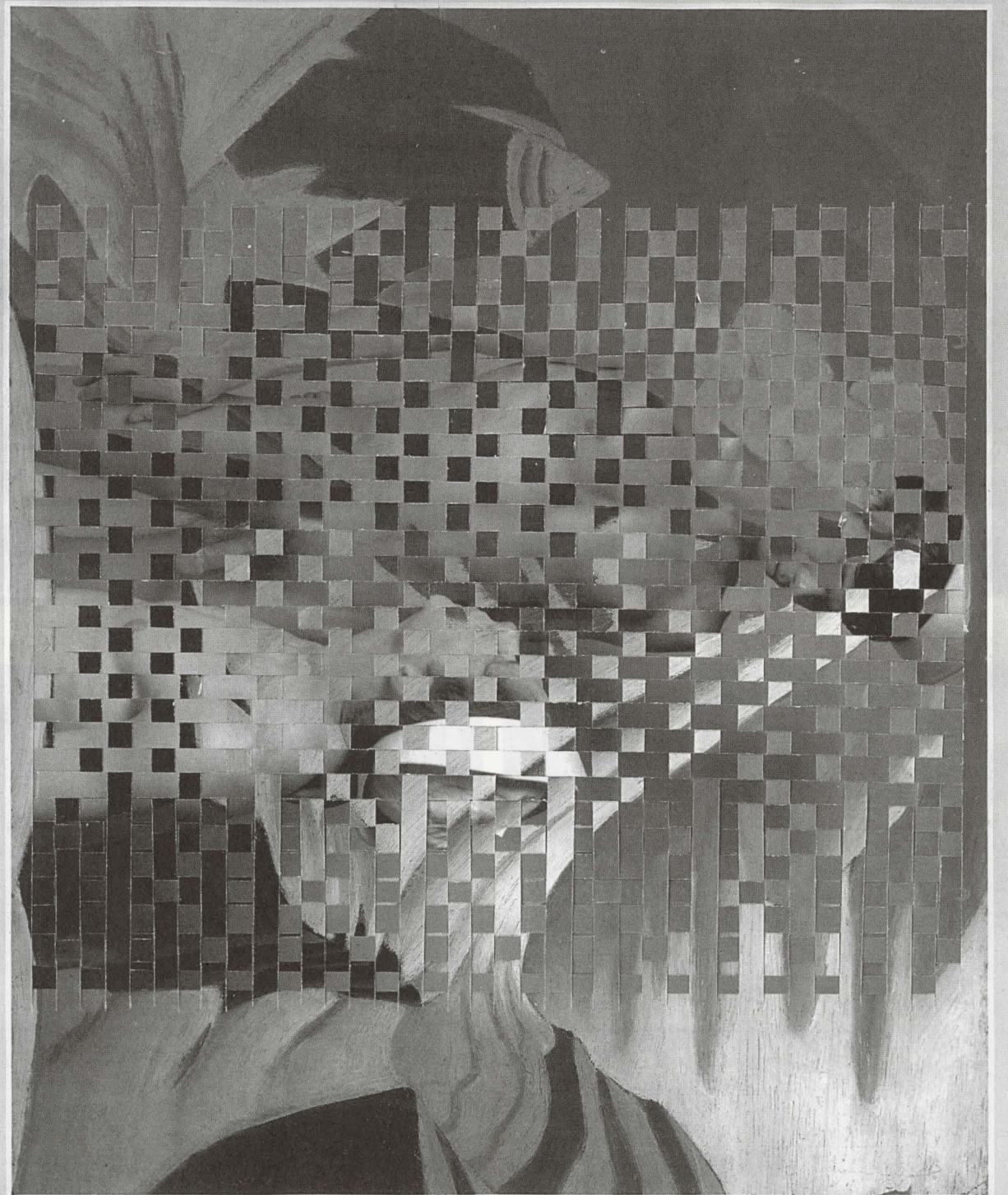
At the conclusion of the meeting, Jackman let the reps of the CMPA know that he could not give any hope that the criteria would change to be more sympathetic to the magazines under the gun. There is some good news to report, however: Jackman believes that we at the magazines are "good people," we should just seek funding elsewhere.

In keeping with FUSE's tradition of covering the arts and their cultural context, this issue considers how a sense of place and location is now dominated by an all-consuming surge toward globalization. A dislocation of artists' practices ensues from these conditions. There is no set agenda for a territory to be covered or reclaimed here: the topics range from the local—the streets of Toronto, Inuit communities, artist-run centres dotting the country—to the transnational electronic domain (in which representations nonetheless always have a place of origin). The focus is on the appropriation and interruption of tactics used by globalizing forces, and thereby, on empowerment.


—Editors

erratum

In Part One of the Jimmie Durham interview featured in the last issue (vol. 20, no. 3), the name of the upcoming exhibition in Germany should have been the Munich Kunstverein. FUSE apologizes for the error.



Brent Cehan



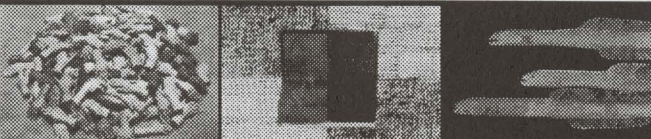
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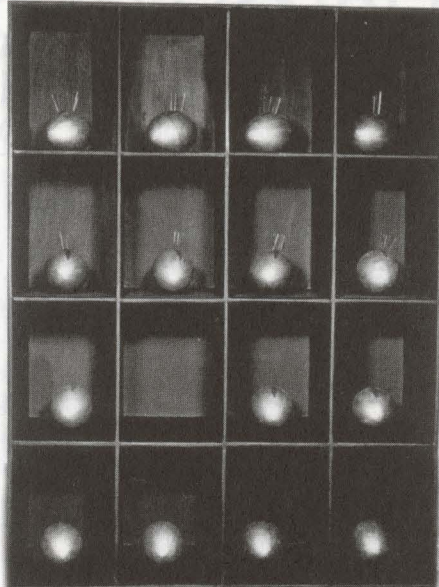
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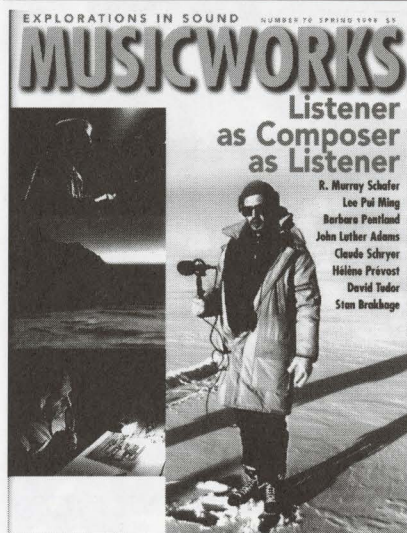
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Inuit Auteurs and Arctic Airwaves

QUESTIONS OF SOUTHERN RECEPTION

by Laura U. Marks

The most widespread, if also most ephemeral, recent representations of Arctic life have been carried along the invisible waves of satellite broadcast and the paper trail of policy and funding. Inuit video production has been a lively scene for fifteen years, largely because of the work of two broadcasters¹ and a handful of Inuit independent producers. It is well-documented that Inuit video and television have obvious benefits for the Inuit communities of Nunavut-to-be. I want to concentrate here on their reception among scholarly and art audiences in the south. It remains impressive and wonderful that against so many obstacles, both Inuit broadcasting and independent Inuit video production have managed to survive, occasionally producing gems both tangible (the videos themselves) and more difficult to measure (the effect of these works on Inuit communities). Between southern soap operas and "Hockey Night in Canada," Northern audiences can see on their TVs bilingual news, call-in shows and teen programming; live broadcasts of hunting (Inuit Broadcasting Corporation's [IBC] "Igliniit," now off the air); videos produced by women's collectives (such as the independent, Igloodik-based Aqsarniit) dealing with oral histories and current issues for women; a lively children's show in both Inuktitut and English populated by exquisitely crafted Muppet-like puppets (IBC's "Takuginai"); an Inuit superhero (Barney Pattunguyak's "Super Shamou" on IBC, discontinued); and a beautifully produced, regally paced thirteen-part series about Inuit life in 1945 (Igloodik Isuma Productions' "Nunavut"). Southern audiences, however, tend only to see the last two or three of these.

What I would like to do in this essay is examine the southern discourses that have emerged around Inuit video and television. I don't intend to attack the rare critics, curators and scholars who have embraced Inuit video and television. They have taken up this work in a spirit of advocacy for Inuit self-determination and self-representation. But the discourse they (or rather, we) have created around Inuit video is a sort of well-intentioned fog, a discourse of auteurship that obscures the infrastructure of video hardware, funding and broadcasting.

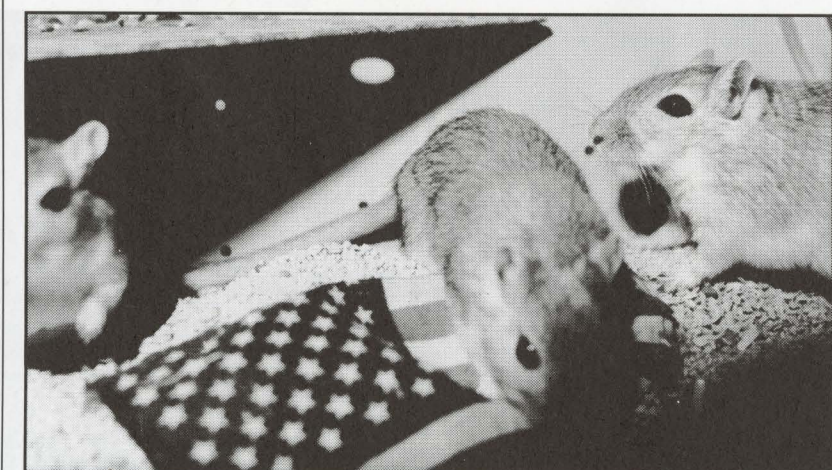
Inuit video is often discussed by southern critics in terms of one person, Zacharias (Sak) Kunuk. Kunuk, together with Paulossie Qulitalik and Norman Cohn, with involvement of the community of Igloodik, runs the independent production company Igloodik Isuma Productions. Their first production, "Qaggiq" (1989), a broadcast-hour "costume drama" about an Inuit gathering in the 1930s, received a lot of attention, screening at venues from the Museum of Modern Art to the Tokyo Media Art Museum. They went on to produce two other features, "Nunaqpa" (1991), "Saputi" (1994), and the thirteen-part series "Nunavut" (1995). Set in 1945 and marking the activities appropriate for each month, "Nunavut" also forewarns the increasing aggression of southern colonizers, especially missionaries. Nunavut has been broadcast and theatrically exhibited: I saw all six hours at the Art Gallery of Ontario.

At the same time, southern audiences have been exposed to Inuit media through the show "Starting Fire with Gunpowder" (1991, David Poisey and William Hansen), a capsule history of the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation. The show omits

¹These are the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation (IBC, Northern Ontario) and Taqramuit Nipiingat Incorporated (Northern Quebec).



Takuginai family, from a postcard for the TV programme "Takuginai." Courtesy of the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation.



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any reference to the lone independent producers, Igloodik Isuma Productions, thereby establishing a rift in southern understandings of Inuit video that persists now. It does include a clip of Barney Pattunguyak's comic-book show "Super Shamou," which won the hearts of southern viewers and has also been screened independently. Another area of Inuit television production that has received some southern attention is women's videos from IBC, the Igloodik-based Arnait Ikkajurtigiit (Women's Video Workshop), and the Pauktuutit Inuit Women's Association in Rankin Inlet, intended primarily for a local audience.² These have also been well-received at festivals in the south, given our interest in identity-based work, though as Marie-Hélène Cousineau of Arnait Ikkajurtigiit points out, Inuit gender politics cannot easily be subsumed to southern feminism.³

Southern attention to Inuit video and television reflects a number of different interests. Art and exhibition world and film/video scholars focus on the work of individual auteur figures, especially Kunuk. Communications scholars concentrate on the infrastructure of Inuit broadcasting; they tend not to pay attention to what the work looks like. Anthropologically minded media scholars tend to work on the social relations between individual producers and community contexts. They are wary of discussing individual works and individual artists, instead discussing how they function in the community.⁴ Most reviewers shy away from overtly interpreting the works, knowing that interpretation is more a reflection of their cultural position than that of the culture they are interpreting.⁵

Inuit producers do not care very much what southerners think about their works, though they acknowledge us, together with other aboriginal audiences, as secondary audiences for their work. I think it is fine to discuss these works according to our own aesthetic and political interests, partly because they are surrounded by a sort of protective layer of non-understanding. We have different agendas and interests in this work than its producers and primary audiences do, and we must acknowledge that these interpretations matter more to us southerners than they do to the people who produce them. Southerners' responses to Inuit video cover a broad range: incredulity that this work even exists; indignation that Inuit would use the "inauthentic" medium of television, with concomitant worries of cultural colonization; a naive assumption that these videos are artless reflections of Inuit reality; cheers for Inuit self-determination in taking a medium that colonized them into their own hands; celebrations of cultural hybridity; an acceptance of Inuit artists into the fold of southern auteurs; and the refusal to say anything at all about these for fear of subsuming them to inappropriate cultural paradigms. Sometimes these responses take place in the course of viewing a single work, a sort of critical ontogeny recapitulating phylogeny.

Many southern scholars are excited to see Inuit turning a new medium to the use of traditional values. Inuit programmes and videos tend to take southern formats—the news magazine, the children's variety show, the soap opera—and infuse them with Inuit content. The late Eric Michaels, scholar and producer of Australian Aboriginal media, worried that the adaptation of existing television genres may be the very worst compromise.⁶ Yet given that a generation of Inuit has grown up with southern television, it seems as necessary to infuse Inuit language and concerns into existing genres as to invent an Inuit use of the medium. I believe "Super Shamou," or at least the idea of Super Shamou, was so enthusiastically received by southern viewers because it fit easily into our notions of cultural and formal hybridity. This short-lived show (Pattunguyak completed just three episodes) seems to fall into the southern aesthetic category of the postcolonial pastiche. Its hero combines Superman-like attributes (the red and blue outfit, the ability to fly) with traditional Inuit qualities (he wears an amulet of walrus teeth, he lectures children on the importance of friendship); the show itself is a mix of action, comedy and landscape genres and the soundtrack combines a dizzying array of musical styles.⁷ Kunuk himself was inspired by American television. He compares his videos to soap

²Marie-Hélène Cousineau, "Inuit Women's Video," in *Video Re/View: The (Best) Source for Critical Writings on Canadian Artists' Video*, ed. Peggy Gale and Lisa Steele (Toronto: Art Metropole and V Tape, 1996), p. 66.

³Kathleen Fleming, "Marie-Hélène Cousineau: Videomaker," *Inuit Art Quarterly* 11, no. 2, Summer 1996, pp. 13-14.

⁴Faye Ginsburg, "Indigenous Media: Faustian Contract or Global Village?" *Cultural Anthropology* 6, no. 1, 1991; Ron Burnett, "The eyes don't have it: Video images and ethnography," *Continuum* 3, no. 2, 1990, pp. 119-139; Michael Meadows, "Ideas from the Bush: Indigenous Television in Australia and Canada," *Canadian Journal of Communication* 20, 1995, pp. 197-212.

⁵Marian Bredin, "Ethnography and Communication: Approaches to Aboriginal Media," *Canadian Journal of Communication* 18, 1993, p. 301.

⁶Michaels writes, "A national television service with no Aboriginal content would be less culture-cidal for Aborigines than badly conceived and produced Aboriginal programs." Eric Michaels, *Bad Aboriginal Art: Tradition, Media, and Technological Horizons* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1994), p. 40.

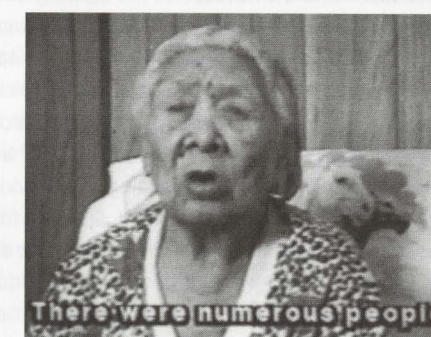
⁷Interestingly, Pattunguyak's later production for IBC, "Qimaiviik," is aesthetically similar to the works of Igloodik Isuma in its representation of traditional activities and use of camera, acting and duration, with a formal elegance lacking in "Super Shamou."

operas like "All My Children," and suggests that his ideal is David Suzuki's "The Nature of Things": "I like his programs because they are true."⁸ Northern audiences seem to have received "Super Shamou" less according to the auteur paradigm of film scholars than according to the more popular star paradigm: Peter Tapatai, who plays Super Shamou, is considered a celebrity in Arctic towns.

Yet these formal comparisons are not my main concern here. What tends to be overlooked in all these southern interpretations, as well as in the resistance to interpretation, is the structural "interpretation" by which only certain videos and certain names trickle down to a southern viewership. Thus an effort to make sense of Inuit video for a southern audience must take into account the broadcasting, distribution and exhibition structures and critical contexts, or the absence of these, that inform how we see Inuit video even before it appears on the screen. In other words, a political economy must overlay the celebratory discourse around Inuit video, to avoid seeing these works in isolation from the larger power structures in which they are embedded: in part, we have to return the context of television to the object of video.⁹ Curating plays a role here too: the best-intentioned activist curator may still be reinforcing the idea that these videos are isolated works. I am advocating an approach to Inuit video that goes even further in acknowledging the coevalness, in Johannes Fabian's term, of Inuit producers and audiences with southern audiences, even at the expense of some of its more fetching origin tales.



"Piujuk and Angutautuq," Arnait Ikkajurtigiit (Women's Video Workshop), 1994, 27.5 min.



"Ataguttaaluk Starvation," Arnait Ikkajurtigiit, 1992, 12 min. Stills courtesy of V Tape.

THE AUTEUR PROBLEM

Igloodik Isuma Productions lists the roles of all participants in brochures and credit sequences: this suggests they prefer to be thought of as a collaborative group. They also stress that their scripts are "based on research with Elders who recount true stories orally from their own experience and knowledge of the past."¹⁰ Yet in Igloodik Isuma's southern reception, it is Kunuk who has been ensconced as an important Inuit video artist and given sole credit for the work. Critics repeatedly compare Kunuk to Robert Flaherty, and Igloodik Isuma Productions to Nanook of the North, in a convenient shorthand for colonialism vs. self-determination. Kunuk was the only videomaker represented in the important exhibition of aboriginal artists, "Land, Spirit, Power," at the National Gallery of Canada, and there "Nunaqpa" was attributed to him alone. That Kunuk tends to be treated as the sole author of these works is in part because of the auteurist discourse that dominates independent film and video, a canon to be expanded by the inclusion of aboriginal artists.

To be fair, this auteurist discourse follows the conventional practice of crediting the director of a work, not the producer, cinematographer or other contributors.

⁸Stephen Hendrick and Kathleen Fleming, "Zacharias Kunuk: Videomaker and Inuit Historian," *Inuit Art Quarterly*, Summer 1991, p. 27.

⁹Bredin, *op. cit.*, p. 303.

¹⁰Igloodik Isuma Productions, "Nunavut (Our Land)" (proposal to Telefilm Canada, 1993), in *Video Re/View: The (Best) Source for Critical Writings on Canadian Artists' Video*, ed. Peggy Gale and Lisa Steele (Toronto: Art Metropole and V Tape), p. 69.

It's also a gesture toward naming individual artists, in the knowledge that many aboriginal artists have gone unnamed in their southern reception. In addition, this response reflects southern critics' reticence to make their own pronouncements on Inuit video, preferring to interview the maker. The focus on Kunuk is also explained by the fact that Paulossie Qulitalik is a unilingual Inuit and does not travel to screenings, so it's hard to interview him. It also has to do with the fact that Norman Cohn, who does travel to screenings, is a white southerner, so interviewers are less interested in him.

Similarly, Marie-Hélène Cousineau, who lives in Igloolik and runs the Tariagsuk Media Centre, and Kathleen Fleming, who has worked with Igloolik Isuma on a number of productions, remark that they feel silenced as "non-authors" in the southern discourse around Inuit media.¹¹ Doubtless the relative silence around figures like Cohn, Fleming, and Cousineau reflects southerners' reluctance to acknowledge the roles of white people in Inuit production. Yet in their structure, Igloolik Isuma Productions and Tariagsuk Media Centre show that Inuitness is a matter of practice as much as heritage. The New Yorker Cohn, by moving permanently to Igloolik and apprenticing himself to his Inuit peers, and Cousineau, who moved to Igloolik from Montreal in order to facilitate local and women's media production, are probably more like "Inuit videomakers," certainly more Igloolik videomakers, than the southern, urban Inuit who hold administrative jobs in Ottawa.

Kunuk does stand out from other Inuit producers in many ways, including that he was the first Inuit producer who did not receive his training through the IBC or its predecessor programmes with the NFB and Department of Communication. Nevertheless, the story of his selling his soapstone carvings in Montreal, buying a video camera with the money, and teaching himself to use it, has become a story of the self-made artist that ignores the infrastructure of Inuit production that gave him able collaborators (like Paul Apak) and a place to broadcast the work.¹²

Thus my attempt to counter the auteurist reading of Inuit video is a modest corrective. Nevertheless, my concerns are several. First, if we are to concede to the auteurist criteria for reasons of convenience, then there are other auteurs besides Kunuk who ought to be considered.¹³ Second, the focus on individual artists, and even on the concept of artistic production, is not quite appropriate to the Inuit use of art for the community. Third, without disputing the importance of his intervention, Kunuk did not arise from the Arctic ice a full-formed video artist like Athena from the head of Zeus: his work is located in an infrastructure, a conflictual network of government agencies, hardware, producers and bureaucrats. In fact, it is the role of Kunuk, Apak, Cohn, and other independent producers within this sometimes strangling network that is of most interest in defining the place of the individual Inuit media artist.

To elaborate briefly on the first point: Video and television production is an inherently collaborative process. Thus it has been an especially appropriate medium for the transmission, and production, of Inuit culture. A potential contradiction exists

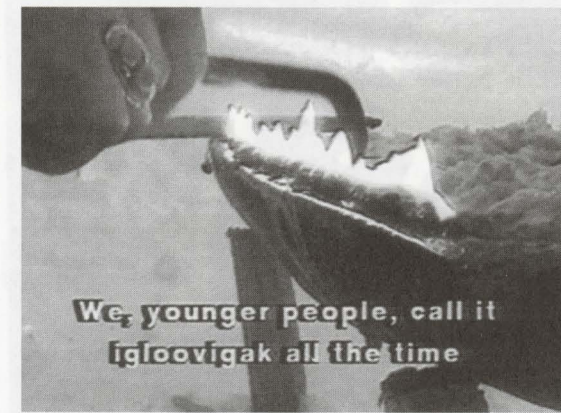


"Quaggiq" (Gathering Place), dir. Zacharias Kunuk, 1989, 58 min. Still courtesy of V Tape.

¹¹Kathleen Fleming, "Marie-Hélène Cousineau: Videomaker," *Inuit Art Quarterly* 11, no. 2, Summer 1996.

¹²To their credit, several critics, all of whom have travelled to Igloolik to take part in (video) shoots, pay attention in their writing to the collaborative process between Kunuk, Cohn, Qulitalik, and others. See Kathleen Fleming, "Igloolik Video: An Organic Response from a Culturally Sound Community," *Inuit Art Quarterly* 2, no. 1, Spring 1996, pp. 26-34; Kathleen Fleming, "Zacharias Kunuk: Videomaker and Inuit Historian," *Inuit Art Quarterly*, Summer 1991, pp. 24-28; Sally Berger, "Time Travelers," in "Landscape(s)," special issue of *Felix* 2, no. 1, 1995, pp. 102-112; Kass Banning, "Local Channels: Zack Kunuk Remodels TV," *Parallélogramme* 17, no. 1, 1991, pp. 25-29; and Peggy Gale, "Transit: Igloolik Tourcoing," forthcoming, *Canadian Art*.

¹³Apak, for example, got independent funding from the Canada Council to produce "Umiaq," about a cross-polar expedition to Sernecki in northern Russia to record the making of a walrus skin coat. Independent videomaker Simon Qassa received a Canada Council grant to make a programme on kayaking. Pattunguyak's lyrical Qimaiiik and the lively children's programme "Takuginai" (Look Here, various producers) also deserve consideration as works of art as well as community services.



"Qulliq," Arnait Ikkajutigiti, 1992, 12 min. Still courtesy of V Tape.

between the more creative, community-sensitive style of independent production and the profit motive. As Eric Michaels points out, ownership, in aboriginal contexts, means not the right to acquire and hoard, as in capitalist society, but the obligation to transmit and exchange.¹⁴ Thus the emphasis on authorship, both among southern critics and to some degree by the independent producers themselves, places these artists within a southern/Western/capitalist discourse of individual ownership, which is somewhat at odds with Inuit tradition. Many native artists/cultural producers prefer not to be called artists, a term that separates their work from its usefulness. Ruby Arngna'naaq writes, "Our word for art means 'making something which is not real; imitating or pretending to make an image.'"¹⁵ Even for Native artists who operate in the mainstream art world, the connection to community, land and ultimately sovereignty is fundamental to their work, as Robert Houle argues.¹⁶ Independent producers such as Kunuk, Apak, and Pattunguyak split from IBC probably in part over creative control and in part over the need to make a profit from their creative work.¹⁷ To raise funds for and profit from their productions, they must present them with an authorial signature.

Also, Inuit independent production must be seen in the context of Inuit television. The communications model of Inuit video, by focusing on the infrastructure of broadcasting, allows us to take into account the struggles over control of production, funding and broadcast that are less often discussed in the video art context. These show that artists like Kunuk are necessarily enmeshed in power struggles between local nodes of production and centralized funding and distribution structures. Kunuk, Apak and others have always said that they felt exploited by IBC, and argued that its Ottawa-based management drained money and creative power from its northern producers. This tension led recently to a bitter exchange between Kunuk and Apak, IBC and the satellite server Television Northern Canada in *Nuniatsiaq News*, the weekly newspaper of the eastern Arctic.¹⁸ Yet there are no simple innocents and villains in this conflict, even given a centralized administration's tendency toward bureaucratization and sedimentation.

To conclude, I would like to suggest that perhaps ultimately what is most Inuit, and at the same time most contentious, about Inuit television is its use of satellite broadcasting, as this continues the tradition of using media to connect and express the will of a community. Video conferencing is now being used in the Arctic for long-distance, interactive medical treatment and management training.¹⁹ It may prove to be a more powerful tool for Inuit self-determination than television programmes about traditional culture. It may also serve to create new, intra-Inuit hierarchies between those who have access to these media and those who do not. Thus the most characteristic Inuit video at present may well be not the works of recognizable directors, but the use of interactive television to link the disparate regions of the new territory of Nunavut.

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¹⁴Michaels, *op. cit.*, pp. 31-32.

¹⁵Ruby Arngna'naaq and Rhoda Kartak, "Pauktuutit Inuit Women's Association," in *Questions of Community: Artists, Audiences, Coalitions*, ed. Diana Augaitis et al. (Banff: Walter Phillips Gallery, 1995), p. 24.

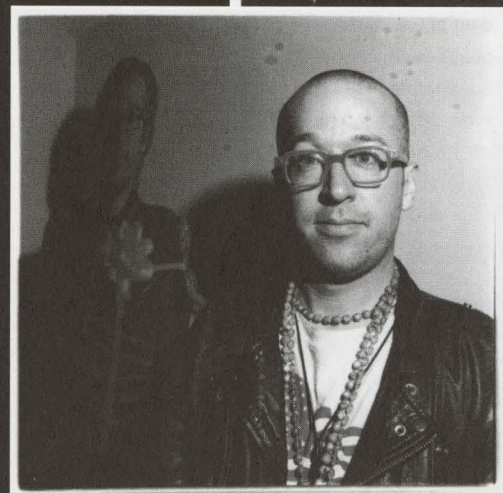
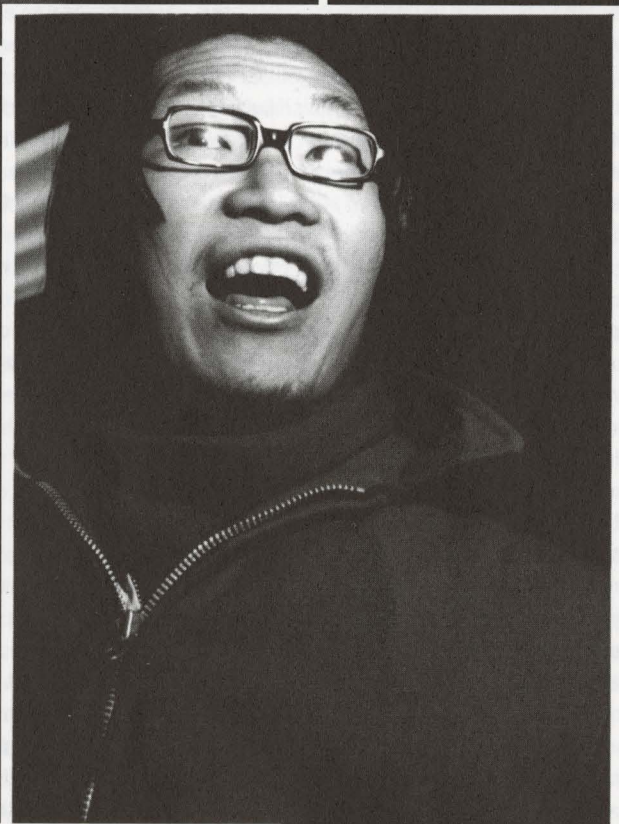
¹⁶Robert Houle, "Sovereignty Over Subjectivity," *C*, Summer 1991, pp. 30-31.

¹⁷According to Melanie Legault of IBC, Pattunguyak left the corporation in late 1997 in order to pursue independent production. Interview, March 1998.

¹⁸In "Southern Managers Bleeding IBC Dry," *Nuniatsiaq News* (24 October 1997), Annette Bourgeois reported that Kunuk and Apak proposed to relocate IBC and TVNC from their Ottawa offices to Igloolik in order to invest the operations' funding into programming rather than administration. In letters to the editor of *Nuniatsiaq News* on 7 November, Pay Lyall, president of IBC, and Abraham Tagalik, chair of TVNC, pointed out that the story was not reportage at all but a reprint of a press release from Igloolik Isuma Productions, and disputed its factual basis.

¹⁹See, for example, "Bridging the Arctic with Classroom TV," *The Globe and Mail*, 13 May 1993; "Igloolik Hospital Pioneers Distance Medicine," *Nuniatsiaq News*, 6 June 1997, pp. 11, 17.

Jill Henderson & Anda Kubis



Photos from Free Parking events/openings by Pete Dako, 1996-97.

NOSTALGIA

As Alternative As You Want Me To Be

by Susan Kealey

I'm looking at the nude group photo of the founders of the Western Front in *Whispered Art History: Twenty Years at the Western Front*. It's kind of a famous photo—if there is such a thing as a famous photo associated with the artist-run movement—and, like many of the photos documenting the early years of the artist-initiated activities, seems to depict a period of wild, unbridled fun. I try to imagine any board posing nude today, or anyone calling themselves Dr. Brute or Lamonte Del Monte. Such pictures fascinate me, because they seem to speak of a more carefree time before the days of bureaucracy, institutionalization and budget cuts.

For someone like me, who both graduated from art school and joined the board of an artist-run space (YYZ Artists' Outlet) in 1989, the artist-run system was quotidian. During my years at art school, students were taken on field trips to Art Metropole or V Tape with more frequency than trips to museums and a fair proportion of your instructors and visiting artists were veterans of artist-initiated activities from film collectives to magazines. At that juncture, though none of the existing centres in Toronto, and arguably across Canada, were as "alternative" as they had been, they were still recognized as a counterforce—if not oppositional—to the mainstream.

Now, as anniversary exhibitions and tomes attest, many artist-run centres (ARCs) are over twenty years old. Only a handful are less than ten years old. The mothership, the Association of National Non-Profit Artists' Centres (ANNPAC/RACA) died an acrimonious death in 1994, though its younger Quebec counterpart, the RCAAQ, continues. Money for culture, while never a priority, has steadily eroded as governments "redefine" their fiscal responsibilities. The funding allocated to ARCs, already a slim slice of the pie, keeps the infrastructure in place but is kept inadequate so that centres can't challenge the hegemony of larger institutions who benefit from both public and corporate support. And artists, as always, remain the lowest on the food chain.

BABY, BABY, WHERE DID OUR LOVE GO?

With the formation of ANNPAC in 1976, the artist-run centre network had already begun, according to Diana Nemiroff, "a process of rationalization or routinization, a process of self-definition that marked the moment of maturation or institutionalization."¹ From its incipience, the ARC movement has been caught in the tensions of imagining itself as "alternative" while proceeding on a process of institutionalization, a process deemed as necessary by many to be able to effectively lobby government concerning policies and funding decisions. In a sense the survival of centres depended on artists becoming adept grant writers and lobbyists as arts councils demanded an increasing level of professionalism along with a commitment to innovation and experimentation. But as Barbara Fischer asks, "Can an alternative survive establishment and still function as an 'alternative'?"² At present, upcoming programming must be determined and submitted to funding bodies so long in advance that spontaneity and the ability to program community events on short notice—especially collaborative ventures with smaller organizations—has virtually disappeared. With operating funding ever-diminishing, multiple small grants must be written for individual projects, publications or events. The more multidisciplinary or ambitious a centre's programming, the more grants to be written.

With less grant money and less grants, most of the artists on any ARC board have one, if not several, jobs and can only volunteer so much time to board responsibilities, which can include installing and striking shows, tending bar, organizing fundraisers, doing mailings and writing grants—and this is over and above attending general and curatorial meetings. Fundraising is now an integral part of ARC activities, though with no tradition of corporate or individual philanthropy in the arts in Canada, and no tax incentives, ARCs are limited in the amount they might raise, despite their best efforts. The few corporations

that do give, focus on larger, more prestigious institutions, not to mention "safe" exhibitions. You won't be seeing an AT&T-sponsored exhibition of queer art anytime soon.

There is no compelling reason for younger artists to become involved with overly bureaucratic ARCs, where actual programming makes up less and less of the agenda of long meetings. Currently many younger artists band into collectives and apply for project funding for exhibitions. Some collectives even forego the bother and delay of applying for grants altogether, preferring to stage an evening in a club with a DJ and charge a small admission. Collectives and one-off exhibitions in rented spaces are nothing new, but as artist Michael Barker recently wrote in these pages, "The artist collective, self-publishing and alternative venue scene in Toronto seems more important than ever in the wake of arts funding cuts and the dismantling of social support networks."³

FREE PARKING?

From March 1996 to March 1997, there was a breath of fresh air in rarefied Toronto when Jill Henderson, Michael Buckland and Anda Kubis—a.k.a. The Institute for Optimistic Living—rented a space in downtown Toronto, called it Free Parking and began putting on exhibitions. It wasn't a very big or attractive space. There was no feasibility study or grant to fix it up. There was no paid staff, no board of directors, no selection committee and, for the most part, they paid no artists' fees. Yet in the space of a year they managed to show the work of over 100 artists—many whose work had never been exhibited before. Artists with international reputations showed along with unknowns and tons of people came to the openings, which usually went into the wee hours of the morning. The collective also gave over Free Parking for other people's events. There were evenings of music and poetry, visiting artists, two publication launches and a screening at a local club. Toward the end, they actually applied for a project grant that financed their final shows and a catalogue—given out free, of course—documenting all the events of the past year. Though Free Parking was not especially novel, in the context of other temporary spaces that have arisen here and in other cities across Canada over the years, it was a welcome "alternative" because artist-run centres have become, by and large, predictable. The shows are professionally executed and presented. Most of the exhibiting artists are successful on the artist-run

circuit and have often shown a given exhibition in ARCs across the country. As Canada has never developed a real market for contemporary art, there is now a vast pool of mid-career artists vying for few exhibitions. Understandably, emerging artists have trouble getting exposure.

Yes, ARCs played a crucial role in the development of contemporary art in Canada. Some of the most incisive magazines and collections of critical writing have come from artist-run organizations. They brought the discourse around gender, race, sexuality and censorship to the forefront of cultural production. ARCs were also instrumental in the presentation and advancement of time-based arts. But as technology becomes increasingly sophisticated and expensive, centres can no longer provide the leadership and innovation they potentially could in this area. Though educational institutions offer students the infrastructure and tools for increasingly complex multimedia work, there are few ARCs able to support and/or exhibit such work.

It seems pointless to argue whether ARCs remain alternative as it's clear that they have become institutions, despite programming that distinguishes itself from museums and public galleries. But ARCs still manage to practise difference—simply because they are directed by artists. In reading various histories of artist-initiated activities, there seems to be at least two constants: that there will always be some disenfranchised/under-represented group of artists that needs a venue for their work and that new "alternatives" always arise to supplant the existing "alternative(s)." The only significant difference today is that the strictures of the economy have made such movements more occasional, more temporary and less possible.

Notes

1. Diana Nemiroff, "Par-al-lel," *Sightlines: Reading Contemporary Canadian Art*, eds. Jessica Bradley & Lesley Johnstone (Montreal: Editions Artexte, 1994), p. 180.
2. Barbara Fischer, "YYZ—An Anniversary," *Decalog: YYYZ 1979-1989* (Toronto: YYYZ Books, 1992), p. 10.
3. Michael Barker, "The Intimate Peculiarities of Communal Travel," *Fuse Magazine* 21, no. 1, Winter 1998, p. 14.

This column derives from a paper presented for the panel "Still Practising Difference? Artist Spaces, Museums, and Contemporary Art," which was organized by Clive Robertson as part of the College Art Association annual conference held in Toronto in February 1998.

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RE: Artist-run Centres

by Reid Shier

The first time I entered an artist-run centre was during an opening at the Off Centre Centre in Calgary in the early '80s. I don't remember the exhibiting artist's name but I have a vivid, arguably mutated, memory of their installation: an arcing plywood table that occupied almost every available square inch of the gallery's decrepit fourth-floor space. The experience of something so ambitiously laborious within what I couldn't help but perceive as a socially marginal building was transformative. It fundamentally altered impressions I'd formed about money, civic space, museums, labour and art.

As naive as I may have been, many of the questions about the efficacy of Canadian artist-run centres (ARCs) in the '90s are still coloured by this experience. As the curator of the Or Gallery, it also informs the way I select work. I enjoy working with artists to mount exhibitions that are specifically tailored to the space. And I believe a pleasurable shock can register when someone enters the Or off the minor devastation of West Hastings Street to encounter something that might be as transgressive as the table I saw in Calgary. Yet, like so many artists who have grown up with the artist-run centre system over the last twenty years, my priorities have changed. I feel blasé about the notion of artistic self-determination that inflects so much of the rhetoric of artist-run culture and believe that while I work at the Or I'm effectively a curator and administrator and not an artist. Boards, selection committees and administrative positions at all ARCs force a polarization between the needs of the artist and the needs of the gallery, fundamentally dividing those who choose the exhibitions from those applying. This division is one of authority and power and has accrued as steadily as the funding that supports our institutions. I see little difference between commercial galleries and ARCs in this regard and given a directorial position an artist will exercise the same privileges as any commercial dealer might. The

perceived losses of such things as responsiveness and spontaneity within established artist-run centres elides the curious silence over the one thing many within the system have grown comfortably accustomed to, namely the power to choose who gets to have a show. As our galleries have grown and matured and the spaces have improved, the chance to make this choice has become more sought-after.

It's for this reason that I believe the structure of any single centre to be intransigent, and why the incessant self-examination familiar to the discourse around ARCs rarely materializes as change. All ARCs bureaucratize their origins. If the centre began as a collective and sought funding to carry out its activities, its administrative configuration will reflect that collective in the form of committees. Staff such as directors and administrators are hired to carry out the directives of these committees. As an exception that proves the rule, the Or Gallery was started in 1983 when an artist began collaborating with her friends to mount exhibits, performances and events in a room of her East Vancouver storefront apartment. When she moved out she gave it to another artist to continue. Years later, when funding became a desire and a board of directors an incumbent necessity, it was decided that the gallery would have a lone curator/director responsible for the space. While the intentions of its originator(s) were assuredly different than those it now ascribes to, the Or Gallery grew out of the fact that one person ran it, and exists today, fifteen years later, because it bureaucratized that fact.

Counterpoised to this rather common narrative of institutionalization are initiatives that are more ephemeral, less bureaucratized and thus, as the argument usually follows, more alternative. Susan Kealey raises the example of Toronto's Free Parking (see page 19). In Vancouver a similar initiative, the Dynamo Arts Collective, began a regular gallery programme about a year ago. Dynamo gives younger artists, many still in art school, the chance to exhibit in a city where



many other ARCs, the Or included, have long since moved to a majority of mid-career showings. Dynamo was met with the enthusiasm that comes with any new exhibition venue, especially one without the patina of a particular crowd attached to it. Unlike Free Parking, however, Dynamo's gallery was begun and curated by one individual.¹ When he recently decided to leave the city he encountered difficulty trying to find a person or group to take over. No one wanted to take a position where there were no prospects of remuneration, and their reasoning was inflected with a fairly cutting cynicism over stepping into a volunteer curatorial role, no matter the career pay-back. The person who began Dynamo is now attempting the unlikely task of organizing its exhibitions from out of town.

In Vancouver, as in other cities, there's a template of artist-run labour to which younger artists gauge the benefits against the huge sacrifices of community involvement. This is common across Canada and one reason so few new initiatives like Free Parking or Dynamo have materialized in the '90s. Looking at the work involved running any artist-run centre, younger artists can clearly see the effects of burnout, loss of time and ridiculously low wages. More locally, however, Dynamo is an example of how affected British Columbia's emerging artists are by the realpolitik of advancement in the art world. In Vancouver a number of artists have achieved international profiles while remaining in the city, and have proven an example to others about the importance of a professionalized and proactive practice as opposed to the mere location of that practice. Regardless of the particulars, their recognition wasn't won by sitting back and waiting for the curators to come knocking at the door, but through concerted efforts at creating national and international opportunities and contexts. Unfortunately, little of this involved any recognition of the energy and time these artists contributed, and in some cases continue to contribute, to Vancouver's ARCs, nor, reciprocally, involvement by ARCs on their behalf.

It's the example of these artists that informs my perceptions of the shifting responsibilities of artist-run centres. It's moot to argue over the failed utopianism of the artist-run genesis, and like it or not, ARCs in Canada are institutions that I believe most wish to be around in another twenty years. They continue to provide forums for exhibitions, events,

texts and discourse that will never occur anywhere else in the country. But given an environment where the possibility of funding for a new ARC is increasingly remote, and where younger artists must establish more ephemeral models for exhibitions and mutual support, the question arises over what direction established ARCs might take.

Relying on the assumption that international recognition is the main method by which artists find economic sustainability, one avenue Canada's ARCs might take is through increased international profiles, and toward this, increased bureaucratization, increased organization and heightened professionalization. Most ARCs have already travelled a considerable distance down this path while remaining beholden to a rhetoric of community and grass-roots development that so many granting bodies use to justify ARCs' existence to their governmental funders.

Bureaucratization is not anathema to support and development of local communities, and ARCs will hopefully always be sites where younger artists and marginalized practices find public forum, but it's evident that ARCs for the most part have not contributed greatly to a healthier climate for visual art in this country despite their monumental contribution to its culture. So shouldn't artist-run centres start questioning exactly what their roles within the local and national communities are? Heightened professionalization would increase the opportunities of promoting and disseminating work internationally, and would begin to benefit the artists whom ARCs have for so long supported and been supported by. More people, myself included, might then know the name of the artist who made that plywood table.

Note

1. A Vancouver tradition if one includes the Or, Artspeak and the dual curators at the Western Front.

Reid Shier is a Vancouver visual artist and is currently the director/curator of the Or Gallery.

...given a directorial position an artist will exercise the same privileges as any commercial dealer might.

Opposite:

In the Way, Dave Casey, installation sculpture, spruce joists and beams. Exhibited at Off Centre Centre, Calgary, April 7–24, 1982. Photo courtesy of The New Gallery archive collection.

From Silent Comedy to Delirium in the Landscape

A PARTIAL VIEW OF CURRENT BRITISH VIDEO

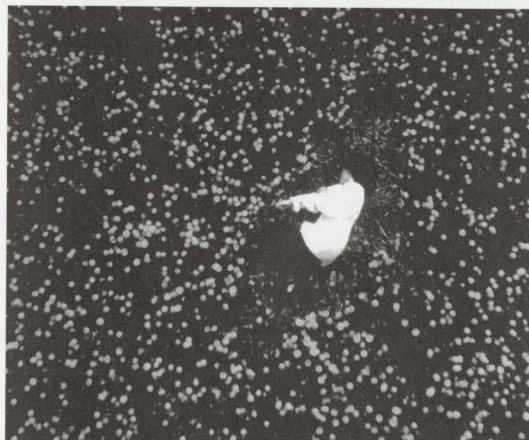
by Catherine Elwes

One of the contributors to Vera Frenkel's *From the Transit Bar* describes the inhabitants of the British islands as "...a tiny, filthy tribal race." I cannot comment on British standards of hygiene, but I hope to show that the well-established video and independent film culture is not as parochial as it may seem, whilst isolating some clear tendencies in the work of contemporary practitioners. Although there is enormous diversity in the field of the moving image, it is possible to identify an enduring love of landscape, a commitment to formal investigation and a quirky Pythonesque sense of humour. But in describing the work, it is important to explain the different levels of visibility, both national and international, that artists enjoy. The phenomenon of the "Young British Artist" has meant that some British work is truly global, operating on an international stage; but there is also a strong local culture from which prominent digital and video work has drawn its inspiration and which continues to develop beside and below the mainstream.

It may be that my understanding of Canadian video is embryonic and I should beware of making confident comparisons between, say, Toronto and London. But upon visiting Toronto it was my impression that Canadian work is still marked by the '70s belief in autonomy, exemplified in artist-run production and distribution centres, of which V Tape is a fine example. In London, a gap has opened up between young, successful artists using video and the work represented by the video access centres London Electronic Arts (LEA) and the Film Co-op. In fact, when I approached this year's Turner Prize winner Gillian Wearing, in the hope that she would allow me to include one of her tapes in the programmes I am curating for the Art Gallery of Ontario, she refused on the grounds that she did not participate in mixed screening, a context she felt she could not control. What has in fact happened is that Wearing is part of a commercial gallery system; her most recent work has already been sold to foreign collectors and will not be seen in her own country. The gap that has opened up is therefore between commercially viable work, promoted by collectors like Charles Saatchi and Jay Jopling in a gallery context, and work that is either fledgling degree work of the recently graduated, or films and videos by mature artists committed to '70s and '80s ideals of alternative practices and independent networks of distribution.

Funding structures emerging from the new alliance of the Arts Council with both the gallery system and broadcast television has also marked a move away from the independent single screen film or video. Artists have more success with installation work in galleries, and the single-channel work that is made is invariably commissioned indirectly by television. Opportunities for showing single-screen work have always been limited and the hoped for participation of mainstream cinemas has not materialized. However, work continues to be made and there is a healthy underground network of unfunded video work by young artists that culminates in the annual Volcano Film Festival in London. The Arts Council and British Film Institute continue to fund the middle ground of established artists, and it is principally work from LEA's current portfolio of tapes and films that I will discuss here.

Remember Me, Michael Maziere, 1996.



Laws of Nature, Tony Hill, 1996.

In spite of the globalization that has become a feature of our technological age, I do not share Toronto art historian Shelley Hornstein's view that geographical location is now irrelevant to the character of a national art. British video and independent film is still largely produced by white middle-class individuals of Anglo-Saxon descent. Although some gay artists like Michael Curan and John Maybury are well-known, the majority of those that make the leap to commercial success are either neutral on this issue or, like Tracey Emin, emphasize their heterosexuality in their work. So, it would seem that unlike women, minorities have made few inroads into moving image culture. A few black artists like Steve McQueen and Keith Piper are active and widely shown, but they are the exception rather than the rule.

Unlike in Canada, a well-established Western culture predated immigration to Britain, which is a relatively recent postwar phenomenon. Although feminism, Marxism and the fight for racial equality have made their mark on society and in film and video culture, a concern with identity is not uniformly present. Many artists have continued to work within a lyrical filmic tradition that has its roots in Romanticism and English landscape painting, while espousing film and video as material deconstructions of the '70s. Michael Maziere's haunting film *Remember Me* (1996) was made in the shadow of his father's death. Although its use of duration and its avoidance of linear narrative link it to structural film, it has none of the sometimes puritanical denial of pleasure that was characteristic of early work of this genre. Maziere, an Anglo-French artist, is not afraid of emotion and a stated subjective position, but his personal expression of grief is tied to rigorous formal considerations and a strong sense of the viewer's reception and possible interpretation of his imagery. This aesthetics of the personal is also much in evidence in the work of the Canadian Nelson Henricks, who similarly evokes the passage of time, absence and loss but with the added exploration of a gay sensibility rooted in a dialogue of the body.

The body behind the camera is the concern of Tony Hill in *Laws of Nature* (1996). With the help of homemade cranes and wheels, he tethers us to the camera and takes us on a series of vertiginous flights over the English countryside. Hill insists on foregrounding the camera position, the filmic apparatus and the viewer's entry into the filmic pact which allows him/her to read projected light on a screen as a sunny spring morning. It is in the work of younger Canadian videomakers that I find a parallel obsession with the structures and mechanisms of representation. However, the fragmented, rapid-fire assaults that Tasman Richardson and Lesley Peters make on the audience are not tied to theories of deconstruction. Theirs is a heady form of video abstraction, like techno-Pollocks prodding the audience "...from an omnipotent seat high above."¹

The young British artist Dryden Goodwin's *Hold* (1994) might appear to share this aesthetic with its dizzying montage of London faces, but I can still detect a kind of formal purism that in, say, Peters' hands would have taken on a lighter touch. The young Canadians also feel free to plunder broadcast imagery where this was more a feature of British Scratch Video in the '80s. An exception is the work of the young artist Andrew Macdonald who is just one year off graduating from Camberwell College of Arts. Much of his work has been concerned with isolating the moments of stillness in television narrative. The reaction shot, when divorced from its narrative framework, can speak with infinite resonances as well as reflect on the codes of television realism. The Scottish artist Douglas Gordon has slowed down *Psycho* to twenty-four hours in the hope of revealing the "unconscious" of the film, but in sixty seconds Andrew Macdonald does something more interesting. *Relapse* (1998) is a slow-motion black-and-white pattern of moving fragments in space gradually reforming. The footage is in reverse, and a sinister Nazi emblem crowning an official building is magically reinstated. Not only does the work draw attention to what must have been American postwar propaganda as they destroyed the monuments of the Nazi regime, but it hints at the persistence of fascism in the modern world.



Hermaphrodite Bikini, Clio Barnard, 1995.

One of the most enduring traditions of British Video is the performance to camera. In Canada, Colin Campbell has developed a conspiratorial, confessional mode that in his recent work has taken on a particular poignancy as he reviews the persona he has adopted over the years. Although the remarkable video work of the British performer Neil Bartlett shares this exaggerated theatricality, there has always been a tradition of more formal deadpan performance, closer to Monty Python than to Bartlett or the Brisley school of the body in extremis. *Metamorphosis* (1998) sees the performance artist Marty St James exploring the absurd lengths to which we go to establish a social identity. He juxtaposes facial contortions with the image of an afternoon tea cake. The behavioural codes of English society are cheerfully sent up and transgressed. Michael Curran's work transgresses at the level of sexual display. *L'heure Autosexuelle* (1994) is a frenetic nude dance performed in front of a bored-looking girl sitting in an armchair. In *Amami se Vuoi* (1994) the girl is replaced by a man and the naked artist is now prone. The man leans over the artist and begins to repeatedly spit into Curran's eagerly gaping mouth. The exchange of body fluids is both shocking in its public display and deeply erotic, but in this age of AIDS, the gesture acquires an edge of danger, softened in this case by a sense of trust that exists between the two lovers.

As in Curran's works, the narrative preoccupations of recent videos encompass both understated lyricism and direct commentary. Seduction is often a hallmark of the former, as in my own *Introduction to Summer* (1992) in which a hand seduces another to the sounds of the seaside and the insistent staccato of tennis on the telly, or Clio Barnard's *Hermaphrodite Bikini* (1995) in which a hermaphrodite with butterfly wings plays in an idyllic garden. Angela Derby seduces the audience with her curious tape *Touche* (1998), where a woman's shaved body hair becomes a ball taken by a group of children as a talisman, a magical toy used in a game of pass the parcel. In contrast, bold statement is central to Stubbs and Whitehurst's *Denial* (1996), a disturbing monologue delivered by Whitehurst from her wheelchair, and in Keith Piper's *Go West Young Man* (1996), a rich tapestry of found imagery framing a discussion between Piper and his father in which they point out how popular myths have shaped their experiences and Western perceptions of black masculinity.

Our small island race is indeed now multicultural, and women have also found a voice in video culture. But if I were to isolate a quality that is often present in this work it would be a concern with formal issues. This can take the form of a deconstructive tool, an enchantment for the imagination, or an exploration of the aesthetics of the absurd that was immortalized in Monty Python's *Ministry of Silly Walks*. The sense of not taking language for granted is a legacy of structural materialist film and the critiques of '70s and '80s feminism. The return to narrative and aesthetic pleasure is now complete, but the best contemporary work takes a leaf out of the old deconstructive manual and instinctively concludes that the best ideas are always simple.

Note

1. Tasman Richardson, courtesy of V Tape, Toronto, 1998.

Catherine Elwes is a videomaker, critic and curator who has a special interest in women's video. She is a Senior Lecturer in Electronic Media at Camberwell College of Arts in London and will be visiting the Ontario College of Art & Design in October.

Two programmes of contemporary British video, curated by Catherine Elwes from the collection of distributor London Electronic Arts, will be shown in Toronto this fall. "Recent British Video: Part I," presented by Cinematheque Ontario and the Art Gallery of Ontario, will be screened in the Henry White Kinnear Education Theatre, AGO, on October 21, at 7 pm. "Recent British Video: Part II, Performance in British Video Art," presented by Pleasure Dome and 7a*1d Performance Art Festival, will take place at CineCycle (129 Spadina Ave. Rear) on November 5, at 8 pm. Catherine Elwes will be present to introduce both programmes.



Hold, Dryden Goodwin, 1994.

BLACK WHOLES

A History of Brief Time

by M. Nourbese Philip

event: A point in space-time, specified by its time and place.

Immersed in a recently bought newspaper, I exit a variety store and almost collide with a man walking west along St. Clair Avenue West. I am immediately apologetic. His response is swift. And contemptuous. "You fucking people are all over the place!"

I suggest he do something to himself which is anatomically impossible. I am angry—very angry. I am also afraid. He is white. He is male. In a big city interactions like these can easily become fatal. I quickly duck into a another store. Some minutes later I emerge and am relieved to see his figure a block or so ahead of me.

quark: A (charged) elementary particle that feels the strong force.

"You fucking people are all over the place!" The white man's words remain with me for a long time. They reverberate within—"all over the place..." "all over the place..." If nothing else, it was clear that he felt I ought not to be on St. Clair Avenue West. The further implication of his statement was that my being on that street in Toronto was evidence that we—African people, I suppose—were "all over the place." The corollary being that we ought not to be. I could easily dismiss that man's statement, were it not for the fact that the notion of illegitimacy contained in his words is carefully nourished, cultivated and brought to splendid fruition in the white-supremacist immigration practices of all the Western, so-called democracies. The main job of these countries—formerly the Group of Seven, now the

Club of Eight—appears to be figuring out how best to club the rest of the world into submission, while keeping darker-skinned peoples physically corralled. Meantime capital, which is in fact our capital, wielded by multinationals, runs rampant and roughshod all over the world. Indeed, all over the place!

big bang: The singularity at the beginning of the universe.

for five hundred years the essence of being black is that you can be transported. anywhere. anytime. anyhow. for five hundred years a black skin is a passport. to a lifetime of slavery. a guarantee that the european can carry out terrorist acts against the african with impunity. for five hundred years the european moves the african "all over the place." at his behest and whim. and then one bright summer's morning, he looks me in the eye and tells me: "you fucking people are all over the place."

ever since the holds of the slave ship, the european attempts to curtail the every moving of the african:

the moving in time
the moving in space
the moving into their own spirituality

the european forbids the african language, forbids her her spirituality; forbids her her gods; forbids her her singing and drumming; forbids her the natural impulse to cling to mother, father, child, sister and brother—forbids her family. leaves her no space. but that of the body. and the mind. which in any event they deny. cut off from their own

histories and History, the african moves into a history that both deracinates and imprisons her. in the primitive. in the ever-living present absent a past or a future.

uncertainty principle: One can never be exactly sure of both the position and the velocity of a particle; the more accurately one knows the one, the less accurately one can know the other.

I live in a starter home. On a starter street. For two decades I have lived in a starter home. The street remains a starter street for many who buy their first home there—a starter home—then move on. There are a few like me and my family, however, who defy the very meaning of start which intends always to lead to somewhere else. We remain. Stay put. In a starter home. Away from home. Defying the wanderer, the lost, the unbelonging in Black. The spore at the root of Africa.

today—the black skin is not so much a passport as an active signifier to those manning borders of the brave new world order of everything that must not be allowed in. crime, drugs, AIDS, sex, ebola,... into these self-same Western democracies whose spawn—the metastasizing multinational—is all over the place.

Robina, Winona, Alberta. Three women's names. And the names of three streets in the neighbourhood in which I live. The same one with the starter home. The story is that at one time, in the past—is there such a thing?—a Black man owned the land on which these streets are now located. That man had three daughters whose names were Robina, Winona and Alberta. I have never verified this story, maybe searing its inaccuracy. Somehow I feel more connected to this area, knowing? believing? that a long time ago Robina (I had an aunt called Rubina), Winona and Alberta, three Black women, grew up here. In this neighbourhood. And that their father once owned this land.

Which in turn begs the question. How did he own it? How do you, as a blackman—an African man, or woman “own” land in a space e/raced of its native peoples, bounded “from sea to shining sea” by the ligaments of white supremacy? A space. Our home and native land—our stolen, native land. A space. Still being warred over by the descendants of two European powers. How do you own land, a house, even a starter home in a space and place where a minor encounter with an/other gives rise to the challenge of your legitimacy in this space. A space of massive interruptions. And disruptions. Mostly fatal for the First Nations people. That is the new world. That is the space we call canada.

magnetic field: The field responsible for magnetic forces, now incorporated, along with the electric field, into the electromagnetic field.

Goethe was of the view that the negative space around which leaves develop influenced the shape of a plant as

much as their genes. Something in the surrounding emptiness, he believed, gave shape to the leaf.

What is the space—the negative space—that is Canada, around which I grow? Around which African people—Black people—grow. How does that negative space shape us? And do we, in turn, shape that space—molding it to fit our specificities?

in this space we call canada, blackness serves as a cypher. a tool. the means by which the larger, white space shapes and ritually purifies itself. blackness becomes the most effective way in which the essence of canadianness—is there such a thing?—is articulated and the purity of canadian space is ensured. so that the refrain—“you fucking people are all over the place” is modified—parsed into “you people will not be allowed to be all over this place called canada. except and in so far as we allow you to be.”

spin: An internal property of elementary particles, related to, but not identical to, the everyday concept of spin.

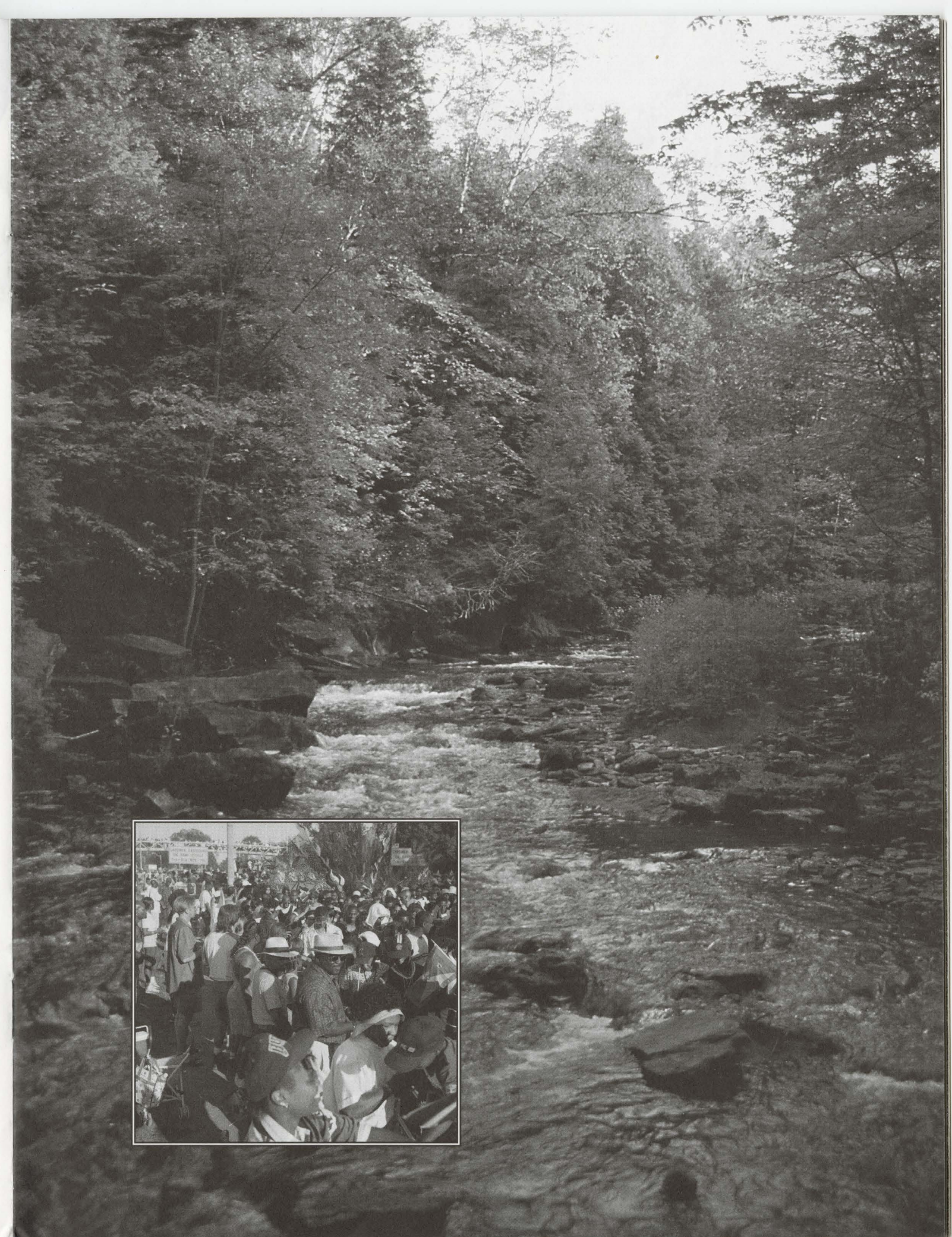
Time and again in the media, the involvement of African men and women in crime becomes the excuse to question the effectiveness of the immigration act. As if white men and women do not commit crimes. As if the very space that is canada is not founded on profound and unforgivable crimes against First Nations people. Against humanity.

“Why are we letting these kinds of people into our country?” the editorials question. Deportation becomes the most favoured tool to deal with that specialty, “black crime.” Despite the fact that many, if not most, of these people convicted of crimes may have spent their most formative years here. in this space called canada.

At least once a year white Canadians ritually define and purify themselves and their space by going through this public process—ably assisted by their media handmaidens—of ensuring that indeed “you fucking people are not all over the place.”

Every two or three years these rituals culminate in the high mass of a commission of inquiry into the state of immigration. The recommendations of these commissions invariably narrow the manoeuvrable space allowed Africans and other peoples of colour. Head taxes, extended waiting periods for refugees, genetic testing of family members—the list of punishments for those who have sinned by desiring to enter the space called canada is long and exquisitely tortuous.

1973 was just such a year: Canadians would examine how immigration practices were affecting the country. In a country built primarily on white immigration, it is significant that in the 1974 Green Paper on Immigration, all the worst-



Photos of the Credit River valley by Si Si Peñeloza

case scenarios used examples of African peoples: for instance, how would parents feel about the "fate of their offspring if their children were to marry a black person." All material showing the potential effect of demographic changes resulting from immigration used examples of domestic migrations of Black Americans within the United States—a country convulsing in response to challenges to its governing ideology of white supremacy.

The black body becomes the measurement—the point at which absolute difference is established.

acceleration: The rate at which the speed of an object is changing.

an emptiness—an absence
 shapes me shaping it
 as the space around
 the leaf serrates
 the oak
 fringes the willow
 needles the larch

you may be born here—your mother's mother and father's father—you will still get asked where you're from. if your skin is black. you answer here. which is where? but if the minister of immigration gets her way—even being born here, in the space called canada, will be no guarantee that you can claim Canadian citizenship.

the white that is snow
 shapes itself around the silence
 of cree and ojibwa—a hardness
 in the face of something new
 strange

primordial black hole: A black hole created in the very early universe.

"all over the place!" is there anywhere in this world—this brave and newly ordered world—to which a white skin does not become an automatic passport? all over the place, indeed! from the fifteenth century on, columbus, pizarro, hawkins, drake and others of that ilk—robber barons all supported by their robber-baron monarchs—run around the world terrorizing africans and other peoples of colour. this is how they repay the hospitality of their hosts wherever they land. their most effective weapon is the company. there is a plethora of companies: the dutch east india company, the company of royal adventurers, the french east india company, the royal african company and on and on. and they deal in bodies. black bodies. what they call pieces of black ivory. today the CEO sons of these same robber barons and buccaneers sit atop multinational corporations whose work has not changed in five hundred years. they

still deal in bodies. yours and mine. "you fucking people are all over the place!" talk about role reversal and projection.

Take the Ossington bus north—say at Dundas. Ride north on it to Eglinton. Observe how the bus goes through a chromatic shift from light to dark as you enter the space of Blackness. That "exotic" space of Blackness as rendered by Atom Egoyan. Up on Eglinton. Heartland of exotica. Exotic from whose perspective? (No review or critique of this film challenges the use of Blackness as nothing more than a signifier. For the exotic.) Then take a walk down Bay. Not so much heartland as engine of the capitalist machine. Observe how monochromatic that space is. Its beat that of a metronome.

rhythm is simply space divided by time. "up on eglinton" at oakwood is rhythmmed in the same time as port of spain, trinidad; as accra, ghana; as scarborough, tobago; as kingston, jamaica; as harlem, new york.

event horizon: The boundary of a black hole.

Canada is the clichéd land of wilderness. Like all clichés it is also founded on truth—the space that is canada contains twenty percent of the world's wilderness. And yet in such vastness Africans and other peoples of colour are to be found by and large only in urban areas. Forty minutes outside of Toronto African peoples are invisible. Not present. Despite some four hundred years on this continent—in this land called canada. Cottage country remains a white enterprise in every sense of that word. Complete with power boats, jet skis and luxury cottages. It is, indeed, a strange way to be "all over the place" when African and other children of colour are noticeably absent from "wilderness" camps outside of the urban areas.

What is it about this experience of "wilderness"—this very Canadian experience—which Africans and other peoples of colour who have come here as immigrants do not participate in. Do our African brothers and sisters, who have been here far longer than we fresh water Canadians have, engage in a different relationship with this twenty percent wilderness?

There appears to be some sort of psychic border which prohibits or limits our entry, as "Others," into this particularly Canadian aspect of life. Considering that most immigrants are at most one generation away from the land, their lack of engagement with it in Canada is significant. For many peoples from Africa and Asia, the land remains integrally linked to their life: not only is it the source of food, but also of healing and spirituality. With European settlement in Canada, however, the "wilderness" has developed a language which we cannot penetrate, unless we enter the world of whiteness—possess a cottage and boat. With the



e/racing of the First Nations presence and their removal to reservations, their wisdoms, their languages, their manner of relating to the land have all been unavailable to us. The "wilderness" has indeed been racialized.

Safety lies in numbers. This is why we African peoples coalesce in cities. We know we will find others like ourselves there, we will find foods we're used to. We can hear our languages spoken. There is an immediate sense of connectedness which cannot be underestimated. It recreates the illusion of home and belonging.

imaginary time: Time measure using imaginary numbers.

I am a child, sitting in a darkened movie theatre. This is our regular Saturday treat. A matinée. The cowboys and white settlers are on the lookout for Indians. The beautiful scenic river becomes ominous: Indian savages may be hiding in the bushes just waiting to scalp white men, women and children. Several years later I paddle a canoe along a quiet lake in north Ontario, round a bend and for a split second am afraid, expecting a canoe of tomahawk-brandishing Indians. Maybe Tarzan will come and rescue me.

Long before I am aware of it the "wilderness" is racialized. In movies, books—fiction and non-fiction—and comic books. I am not from the American South, but as an African person the American South is in my psyche. Somewhere.

Walking up a back road in Southwestern Ontario the sound of an engine behind me tenses my body, my thoughts—and fears—turn to rape, lynching and racist rednecks. Nor can I forget, while vacationing in Minden, Ontario, deep in the Haliburton Highlands, that white supremacists held a rally in that very town not that long before.

When you put an African person in the woods, in the "wilderness," one of the first images that comes to mind is that of being hunted. By dogs. By white men with shotguns.

The immediate and individual power of the redneck cannot be underestimated—one only has to think of the recent lynching in Texas of an African American by three white men who tied his body to a truck and dragged him to his death. As the most powerful purveyor of popular culture, however, the movies have played a significant role in representing the "wilderness" and rural areas as the heartland of the redneck. They also let the urban redneck off the hook. One of the strongest screen images of the racist is that of poor, white trash riding shotgun in an old beat-up pickup truck. Seldom do we ever see those three-piece, pinstriped business men and women (members of the Club of Eight) riding shotgun, hunting Black people. But they are, indeed, the ones with the resources and commitment to the policies and practices which have carefully nurtured and sustained the belief system of white supremacy.

Meantime Africans are literally scared off the land, which the European purchases and enjoys relatively free of any contact with African people.

It is winter. I am standing on a frozen lake some two hours north of Toronto. There is a still whiteness all around me. In this moment I recognize something about the way in which First Nations people relate to the land. As a living, breathing force which one needs to interact with. Not to conquer, but to be in relationship with. Several hours later I hear the First Nations scholar, Georges Sioui, speaking eloquently about the need for the newcomer—the European—to learn the concept of Americity. Americity, he argues, encapsulates an approach to the land which all the first peoples of the Americas share.

white dwarf: A stable cold star, supported by the exclusion principle repulsion between electrons.

in the brave and oh so new world where africans have no agency—can be bought or sold at will, they turn their eyes to that large undifferentiated space lacking any particularity for them. the singularity to the north called canada, at the end of the north star. where harriet tubman took her people and "never lost a single passenger." they was going to do some walking, these africans, out of slavery. into freedom. or so they thought. into the space called canada.

this space called canada is not a white, virgin space. it never was. it is a space that was initially inhabited by brown peoples. and continues to be. the black presence—the african presence—has been here for a very long time—indeed ever since the blackman, matthew da costa, arrived with Samuel de Champlain in 1605. the space that is canada is linked to the black world, the african world as a space of refuge, hope and new beginnings, all too often unrealized. during the american revolution the crown promises freedom and land in canada to africans who would flee their owners and fight on the side of the loyalists. they receive their freedom and land; often it is the most barren land and their presence in this space is neither valued or wanted. in 1796 the colonial government of jamaica grows tired of trying to keep control of the maroons and ships them to nova scotia. once again freedom proves to be a mirage for africans—eventually the maroons emigrate to sierra leone. it is a space—this space called canada—enlarged by appetite—salted, east coast cod is sent to the caribbean to feed the bodies of enslaved africans; in return hogheads of rum are shipped back to the east coast. for free europeans. the appetite for cheap labour: african caribbean men join their nova scotian brothers in the mines of sydney. in ontario african caribbean women enter the space we call canada as cheap domestic labour. doing work white women will not do.

mass: The quantity of matter in a body; its inertia, or resistance to acceleration.

Canada remains the place to which people flee. Good guys fleeing bad guys; bad guys fleeing good guys; white draft dodgers fleeing their abbreviated futures in the jungles of Vietnam; some Black draft dodgers; wealthy businessmen and women who can buy Canadian passports. You name it, there's always a good reason to head for Canada. These people never go to Vancouver, or Toronto, or Sudbury. At least as represented in the movies. Sometimes—very sometimes—they go to Montreal, which is French and, therefore, not really Canada after all. It is that undifferentiated mass—the same mass that Africans set out for a long long time ago—that is the space of Canada they head for. It is a space of becoming. All things to all people. Canadians on the other hand almost always never head for the United States, preferring instead L.A. or San Francisco, or New York or Chicago. Unless you're Black of course, and you're going Stateside. Which is a very different country.

weight: The force exerted on a body by a gravitational field. It is proportional to, but not the same as, its mass.

I am at a resort in the Hockley Valley—the land around it has been reshaped with the golfer in mind. There is an abundance of open space carefully mowed and shaped into an eighteen-hole golf course. Here white men get to drive around in little, white buggies (often followed by their women, also in little white buggies); they jump out, hit little, white balls around the green expanse, then jump back into their little, white buggies and drive off. The sense of expansive entitlement is palpable.

It is a very white space. Tiger Woods notwithstanding.

The buffet style meals continue this theme of largesse and plenitude bringing out the gluttonous, all-you-can-eat side in me.

It is the same approach of that quintessential marauder, the European, to the world. Eat all you can. It is the same approach the multinationals, supported by the "clubbers-of-eight," to the world today. The world and its resources have become a smorgasbord, a buffet, at which they are each expected to consume all that they can, go back for seconds, thirds and fourths, and hang the consequences.

The flashpoint of the 1992 Oka crisis lay in an attempt by white Canadians to expand a golf course. Into an area that had spiritual significance for the First Nations people in Quebec. So that white men with their golf clubs could run around in little, white carts, hitting little, white balls. Frances Cress Welsing, the African American psychologist, has argued that there is symbolic social and racial significance in the kinds of balls used in sports. It is no coincidence, she suggests, that golf—a game involving little, white balls played over a vast expanse of land—is traditionally the elite

sport favoured by rich, white men, and from which Black men have also traditionally been excluded.

So powerful is the sense of white space, I hesitate to walk on the green, walk instead on the paved roads linking these eighteen holes. My black and female body vibrates with the question: am I allowed? Not so my companion who is white and male. He too, although not a golfer, shares in this aura of entitlement. The space is his to occupy. Which is a microcosm of how our peoples inhabit this space that is canada. One with a sense of entitlement—even greater than that of the First Nations people, the other with a sense of being allowed in on sufferance.

strong force: The strongest of the four fundamental forces, with the shortest range of all. It holds the quarks together within protons and neutrons, and holds the protons and neutrons together to form atoms.

sing to me of africville where african nova scotians build a community. In the implacable face of white supremacy. then sing me the africville blues that tell of city fathers attempting to e/race the african presence. in this white space white space called canada. so that they can build a park! not a golf course. but a park with a water fountain. what is the negative space called canada around which those early african canadians shaped themselves? into africville. into resistance. and into memory.

Listen to the sound of the river. I did. The Credit River. I sit, close my eyes and listen to the sound of the water flowing by. And within the sound of water I hear the sounds of the languages of the First Peoples. The liquid, mellifluous sounds of their languages. I listen and bear how the very sound of the space around us shapes us fundamentally—from the ground up so to speak, so that even the tongue must remain faithful to the language of the land.

space-time: The four-dimensional space whose points are events.

You cannot talk about space as it relates to Black people—to African people—without talking about movement or moving through space. And once you talk about moving through space as it relates to Africans, then you must confront the forces that prohibit or restrict that moving.

What happens when "you fucking people are all over the place!"? As in Caribana. Where hundreds of thousands of black bodies take over the streets of toronto. This collectivity of black bodies, that is truly all over the specially allocated place, is always seen as a potential source of trouble. A threat. To the city fathers, and were it not for the 200-plus million dollars Caribana brings into the city, it would have been stopped a long time ago.

Just as immigration has become the ritual purification ceremony for white Canada, so the yearly abasement of

Caribana organizers before the city fathers, begging for money and permission to move, has become an important provincial aspect of that ritual. The white fathers control the space through which these black bodies will move and will to move: virtually every year the police flex their collective muscle and threaten to withhold permits and licences. The white fathers reaffirm their supremacy by portraying the african organizers as being unable to manage money. Proof being the debt the organizers have incurred. No mention is ever made of the monies the province annually pours into European-based arts such as the opera, the ballet, the symphony, the Art Gallery of Ontario and the Royal Ontario Museum. None of which generate the financial returns that Caribana does. No mention is ever made of the many financial fiascoes of governments, both provincial and federal, such as the Sky Dome and Pearson International Airport, for which taxpayers have had to pay. No mention is made of the \$200-plus million that Caribana brings into the province's coffers. But within this space allowed to African people, to black bodies, there must be the ritual scourging of those who will not be allowed to be all over the place. And ritual obeisance to those who are, indeed, all over the place.

photon: A quantum of light.

the moving of african peoples within a white supremacist society that forms a space of longing. a longing to be free in that most basic of senses—freedom of movement. which is exactly what africans do not and have not had ever since the european moved their bodies from africa to the new world. and then told them that they could not move. or run. they could only die and even that was forcibly prevented at times. today, despite michael jordan flying through the air to do his slam dunk, or oprah travelling in the stratosphere of the wealthy, or cosby, or michael jackson. the black body moving through space—the physical space—is still a threat. to be controlled. by those whose job it is to control the space. chief among whom are the police who harass african people, particularly african men, to a degree that the very concept of freedom of movement as it applies to black people is ludicrous.

wherever it takes place—notting hill, new york, montreal, miami—the route of this festival is, indeed, a route of memory, moving through the lower case historical space that is the african canadian community here in canada, as well as the upper case Historical space that is the trajectory from slavery to freedom. it is a route of memory that traverses and confronts the space that is canada which is essentially founded on white supremacist principles. the dynamics of this space functions so as to e/race the black presence—the african presence in this country, while enriching itself at the expense of those very black bodies. how else to explain the refusal of hotels in the city of

toronto, some of the largest financial beneficiaries of the presence of thousands of black bodies in this space, to make any financial contribution to the staging this festival in the form of sponsorships? the prototype for this present e/racing of the african presence is the earlier e/racing of the first nations presence. the white space we call canada is, indeed, a palimpsest scored by multiple e/racings.

how, in the space we call canada, do we explain that at the last junos awards ceremonies, black musicians were given their awards at an earlier, non-televised ceremony? how, in the space we call canada, do we explain that the cbc, the supposed voice of the nation, does not have a single black television show? are we to conclude that in this so-called vast country of ours, there are no black screen writers, with stories to tell? or black actors needing work?

nucleus: The central part of an atom, consisting only of protons and neutrons, held together by the strong force.

The engine driving the popular music industry in the world today is African music. Given that it has the largest number of African peoples in Canada today, Toronto naturally becomes a happening city for black music. This was the argument Milestones Communications used to base its application to the CRTC for a licence for a Black music radio station. For the second time the CRTC refused to award a licence for a Black-owned radio station. The last remaining FM spot went to the CBC. The previous one to a country and western station—CISS FM.

The issue was never truly about black music. Had that been the case Milestones Communications would have got its licence. To licence a black-owned radio station, which opens up the possibility for the coverage of issues of importance to the African Canadian community and to the world Afrosporic community is to hand the African Canadian communities a resource with enormous and unpredictable potential. To withhold the license is to ensure that African Canadian people will not have the cultural space necessary for them to flourish as a people. In this space we call Canada.

black hole: A region of space-time from which nothing, not even light, can escape, because gravity is so strong.

White society perceives the black body as dangerously transgressive. The black body is not only cypher, but metonym for danger, crime and subversion. To have thousands of these black bodies in the heartland of white Toronto is not exotica. For many, and particularly the police, it is nothing but a riot waiting to happen. Despite its aura of celebration, Caribana is symbolic of the discomfort the black presence creates in the falsely white space of Canada. In 1994, for instance, when the first Kiddies



Carnival (for children) was scheduled to be held in the Oakwood/Eglinton area—a predominantly Black area—many of the area's Italian residents, ably supported by their members of Parliament, vehemently opposed the event. Community meetings held to discuss the issue degenerated into shouting matches, and the newspapers quoted Italians as telling African organizers to hold their parade elsewhere. Where else? If not Oakwood and Eglinton.

neutron star: A cold star supported by the exclusion principle repulsion between neutrons.

I attend a funeral of an elder of the African Canadian community in Toronto. There isn't enough space for us in the funeral home. People spill out onto the sidewalk and again there is a sense of there never being enough room for us—not enough space. After such a long presence in this city, in this country, there are no Black-owned funeral homes, so that even in mourning our passing there remains the sense of being cramped and stifled.

Meantime the media allow us all the space we want, provided we show ourselves to be criminals and murderers, always looking for handouts, starving in africa, dying in africa, killing in africa. There is very little space for any other representation.

exclusion principle: Two identical spin-1/2 particles cannot have (within the limits set by the uncertainty principle) both the same position and the same velocity.

Where else should Africans and Black people free up? If not at Oakwood and Eglinton. Where else if not in the heart—centre is perhaps more apt—of the city? After twenty years of moving and dancing down (and sometimes up) University Avenue past the symbols and statues of a now defunct empire, past the U.S. embassy—symbol of a very present empire, past the law courts that play a disproportionately large role in African life, past the hospitals where many Africans work, often in the lowest jobs, Caribana has grown too large for the city. Or so they tell us. In 1994. Its organizers move it to the Lakeshore. Africans will have more space to free up, is the argument. Sitting on the grassy areas along the Lakeshore, watching the lake shimmer in the summer sunlight, it is easy to imagine that one is indeed in the Caribbean. The resemblance to the islands is uncanny—a sort of simulated re-representation of the Caribbean with its coastal communities and villages. The water, albeit fresh water, reminds you of the salt waters those first Africans crossed. Both separating and connecting us to Africa.

There is a shadow side: participants and spectators alike have literally become littoral if not litter/al—marginal.

naked singularity: A space-time singularity not surrounded by a black hole.

Within the confines of the city Caribana cannot/could not be ignored. The wide open spaces of the Lakeshore work to dilute and dissipate the energy generated by the gathering of so many black bodies. This dilution and diffusion is one of the unique effects of Canadian spaciality. It might be one of the ways the negative space that is Canada helps to shape its inhabitants. The beauty of the scenic surroundings works to undercut the tension generated by black bodies. The parade nature of the festival increases along with greater police control. Complete with signs commanding the music to "stop here." A sort of public coitus interruptus. Barricades restrain people. It is more of a challenge to participate, to move from spectator to performer, as happened on University Avenue—an important aspect of carnival. Helicopters patrol the event in a way they were unable to on University: at the end of the day the Lakeshore has a feel of South Central, L.A., with circling helicopters and spotlights. Not to mention the garbage cleaners after the last band literally and ritually cleansing the white space of the stain of blackness. And heaven forbid that there should be a disturbance of any sort, then people—African people—are boxed in between the expressway and the lake.

electric charge: A property of a particle by which it may repel (or attract) other particles that have a charge of similar (or opposite) sign.

the space that is canada—a space of refuge over which hangs the north star—to which those early africans fleeing from the United States, leaving the past, moving into the imperfect present, believing it a racism-free space. the space we call canada: a respite—a hiatus—a pause—a caesura between the space of violence of the pilgrim fathers. and mothers all. and the space as yet unformed. the african fleeing a space where black was not cypher or postmodern hieroglyph. but a thing. fleeing a space where even the so-called savage native could own an african slave. provided they—the native that is—were civilised enough. as in the five civilized tribes. this space that is. canada. a negative space. around which we? i? the african. the black. shapes herself—ourselves. a space of unrelenting, unforgiving whiteness. a tabula rasa which was never blank.

nuclear fusion: The process in which two nuclei collide and coalesce to form a single, heavier nucleus.

Note: All definitions are from Stephen Hawking's A Brief History of Time.

M. Nourbese Philip is a poet and writer who lives in the space-time of the City of Toronto. She has published four books of poetry, a novel and two collections of essays. She is a Guggenheim Fellow in Poetry, the recipient of the Casa de las Americas prize, the Lawrence Foundation prize for short fiction and the Arts Foundation of Toronto Award in Writing and Publishing.

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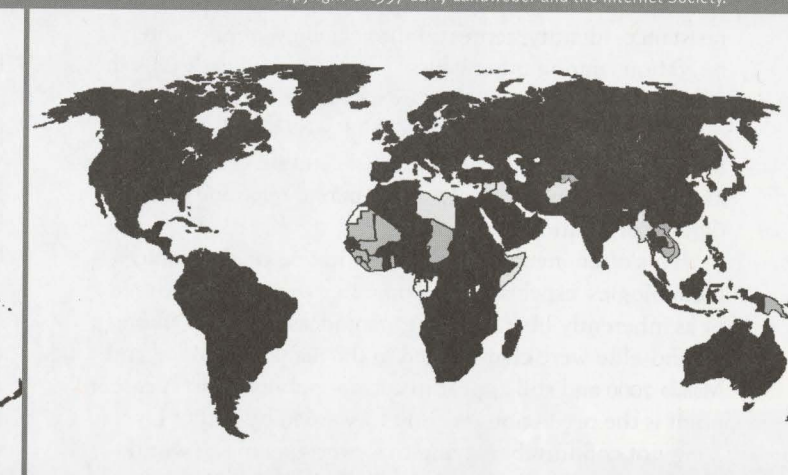
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1991



1997

digital imperialism

by María Fernández

For the past two decades, postcolonial critical theory has been notably absent from electronic media practice, theory and criticism.¹ Recent debates around topics such as multiculturalism, colonialism, the 1992 quintcentenary, identity politics and "whiteness studies" make it ever more striking that postcolonial studies and electronic media have developed parallel to one another but with very few points of intersection.

I became aware of the disjunction between the two fields in 1990 as a result of two events: the Second International Symposium on Electronic Art (SISEA), in Groningen, the Netherlands, and a research trip to Mexico that I took shortly after the symposium. At SISEA, I was disturbed by what seemed to be a lack of awareness by most of the conference participants of worlds other than the so-called postindustrial First World. Several papers trumpeted the long-awaited arrival of free information, equality, democracy,

justice, world harmony and peace to the planet, all made possible by electronic communications technologies.²

During my trip to Mexico I was confronted by the realities of technological inequalities that defied this faith in a freely and unproblematically connected planet. My impressions of these two divergent contexts were strengthened upon attending other electronic arts events and in subsequent trips to Mexico. In a symposium entitled Ideologies of Technology, held in May 1992 at the DIA Foundation, little attention was given to economic issues concerning electronic technologies, or to the impact of these technologies in the developing world. The Third International Symposium on Electronic Arts (TISEA) held in Australia in November 1992, was an attempt to engage in multicultural critique of electronic technologies; Computer Aesthetics and Cultural Diversity was a central theme for the conference. Several papers discussed this subject, but gave insufficient

attention either to specific historical and socioeconomic contexts or to critical theory.

In retrospect, I realize that 1990 and even 1992 was too early for postcolonial critiques to have any impact on electronic media theory. Postcolonial studies have been concerned primarily with European imperialism and its effects: the construction of European master discourses, resistance, identity, representation, agency, gender and migration, among other issues. In the '80s and early '90s the electronic media theory that existed was concerned with establishing the electronic as a valid and even dominant field of artistic practice. Many artists and theorists were knowingly or unknowingly doing public relations work for digital corporations.

This often involved the representation of electronic technologies, especially the computer, as either value-free or as inherently liberatory. Utopian ideas common among a techno-elite were championed in the magazines *Wired* and *Mondo 2000* and still appear in current publications. A case in point is the prediction recently forwarded by Esther Dyson: "I am not comfortable saying that everyone in the world should be on the Net. But in the end, everyone will be except for a few holdouts. The challenge is to make sure that those holdouts are there by choice, not for lack of it."³ In fact, the notion that electronic technology equals freedom has become a kind of crusade.

In 1995 John Perry Barlow announced that "in a few years, every man, woman and child in the world will be electronically connected."⁴ He did not consider the fact that in many parts of the world telephones and electricity are still rare commodities or entertain the possibility that "connecting" is dependent on pan-capitalist enterprises—in order to "be free" you have to pay. He reiterated this ideal in a report of his recent trip to Africa, tellingly published in the form of an "explorer's travelogue" in the January 1998 issue of *Wired* magazine.⁵

A cursory examination of graphics illustrating the history of the Internet seems to support Barlow's and Dyson's arguments (see previous page). The International Connectivity map for 1991 shows vast areas of Africa and Asia with no connectivity. In the 1997 version, most of the world is indicated with connection to the Internet. A few countries in Africa, Asia and Oceania are shown with only e-mail connection and very few places show no connectivity. The American continent, from Chile to Alaska, shows solid connectivity. In appearance, everyone is connected.

These maps show the availability of Internet providers in each geographical area but tell little about the percentage of the population that is able to use them. In many countries a vast majority of Internet connections are sponsored by government and research institutions. The cost of independent Internet access can be prohibitive. The representation of the world's Internet connectivity in these diagrams is like the representation of the availability of other commodities worldwide. If in the mid '80s one had used the same

model for mapping telephone connectivity, most of Latin America would have appeared connected. Yet, in 1985, more than a century after the invention of the telephone, there were five telephones for every hundred people in Latin America as opposed to seventy-seven in the United States.⁶ Utopian rhetoric has played a role in the diffusion of electronic technologies, by updating the ideals of the "civilizing mission" of earlier colonialisms. As Edward Said has eloquently argued, humanitarian rhetoric is crucial for imperialist projects since it is through such rhetoric that decent people come to willingly support imperialism.⁷

Some writers argue that like Modernism, electronic media are so widespread that far from being imperialist it has become a world project.⁸ Although some day this may be true, at present one cannot dissociate the manufacture and distribution of these technologies from economic profits made in the developed world or from an ongoing process of the colonization of knowledge that began with the book and continued with media such as film and television. In the opinion of Said, these technologies are crucial for the construction of identity in formerly colonized regions since colonized peoples learn about themselves through these forms of knowledge.⁹ Homi Bhabha differs with Said when he argues that hybrid cultural forms resulting from colonial situations undermine imperial authority.¹⁰ In theory this is true as hybrid forms evidence the ambivalence of imperial "truths." But, historically, hybridity in and of itself, without integration with critical discourses, has been insufficient to pose a challenge to imperialism.

Now more than ever it is crucial for those of us who have access to electronic technologies to learn to identify the imperialist underpinnings of the electronic revolution in order to be able to contest the reenactment of time-tested imperial strategies in this new field. I hasten to add that the relation made here between electronic technologies and imperialism is meant neither to promote Luddism nor to suggest that no subaltern group has ever used computers to its advantage. Rather, I would like to problematize claims of the universal applicability, desirability and emancipatory potential of this constellation of technologies. I propose that in order to better evaluate the democratic possibilities of new technologies, and the corporate hype, we should examine both the consumption of technology and the production of science.

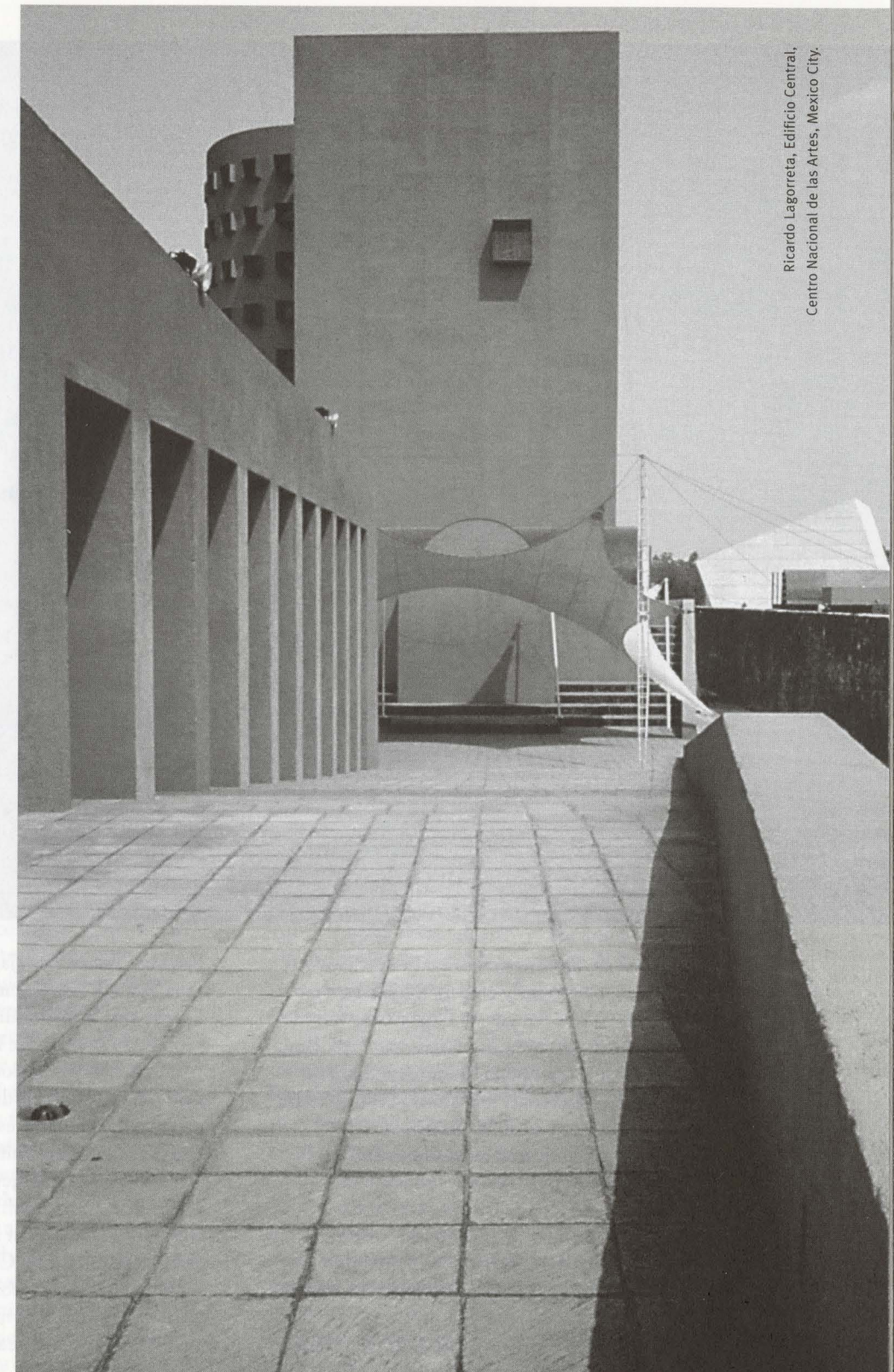
The notion of "postindustrial society" assumes that in developed countries industrial production has ceased to be the most important economic activity and that it has been replaced with the processing of information.¹¹ Even critical positions that maintain that information workers are subject to the same labour-capital relation as factory workers leave undiscussed shifts in the geography of production that allow the postindustrial society to exist in the first place. It is not that postindustrial countries no longer rely on factory work. It is only that First World capital has relocated its factories offshore or in hidden places. Developing countries

contribute to postindustrial economies though labour, now another resource to be "mined" or extracted.¹²

Innovation in electronics, and particularly in the computer industries, ensures the existence of distinct classes among consumers of electronic goods. New software and equipment are expensive, but become less so as the technology reaches a wider market. Yet because technological development is so rapid, almost at the same time that a product is marketed it becomes obsolete. Constant updating is necessary in order for a consumer to stay current. Outdated technologies are first made available at a reduced price in developed countries and later "dumped" in developing countries. But even if some goods become cheap by American and European standards, they remain expensive in developing economies. Because only a small segment of the population can afford electronic technologies, developing countries constitute a tiny percentage of the world market. In 1995, Africa and the Middle East each accounted for approximately 0.9 percent of the total world value of imports of data processing equipment. Latin America totalled 2.8.¹³

As in other parts of the developing world, involvement with "state-of-the-art" technology in Latin America is limited to relatively small segments of the population, socioeconomic elites, who are usually bilingual and sufficiently wealthy to purchase electronic equipment and travel abroad. Both literacy and command of the English language are skills required to participate in electronic culture.¹⁴ In 1991, I visited Mexico with the intention of organizing an exhibition of works in electronic media other than video. My expedition was unsuccessful. While computers were employed in the business world, there were very few artists practising in these media. Some of them financed their work independently, others borrowed equipment from friends, but on the whole

production of electronic media art was meager. Few institutions supported that kind of work. A year later, the Mexican state opened avenues for electronic media art, yet even today the number of artists living in Mexico and practising in this field is very limited.



Ricardo Lagorreta, Edificio Central, Centro Nacional de las Artes, Mexico City.

Ricardo Lagorreta, Edificio Central, Centro Nacional de las Artes, Mexico City.



During the Salinas de Gortari government in Mexico, there were high hopes, particularly among the elites, that under the guidance of Carlos Salinas de Gortari's economic advisors and the approval of the North American Free Trade Agreement, Mexico would transcend "underdevelopment." This belief found support in *Fortune* magazine's reports of the dramatic increase of the number of Mexican billionaires during Salinas' term and manifested itself physically in the fabric of Mexico City through a series of monumental architectural projects that visually proclaimed Mexico's prosperity. A few of the architectural proposals made during this period aroused the wrath of environmentally minded critics by disregarding the city's fragile geological constitution.¹⁵

One of the most impressive commissions of the Salinas de Gortari regime was the Centro Nacional de las Artes, an extensive complex in which each building was assigned to a prestigious Mexican architect. Ricardo Legorreta designed the Escuela Nacional de Artes Plásticas, the Edificio Central and the Torre de Investigación Artística. Teodoro González de León and Ernesto Betancourt were responsible for the Conservatorio de Música, the Grupo LBC, Alfonso López

Baz and Xavier Calleja, designed the Teatro de las Artes; Luís Vicente Flores and Associates the Escuela Nacional de Danza and TEN Arquitectos; Enrique Norten and Bernardo Gómez-Pimienta, the Escuela Nacional de Arte Teatral.

The Centro Nacional de las Artes is more than a collection of masterful buildings. The architecture houses advanced teaching, research and production facilities. On site is the national cultural television channel, Estudios Churubusco, the largest film studio in Mexico, and the Centro Nacional Multimedia, a research centre for artists that has no parallel in Latin America or in the United States. Initially, The Centro Nacional Multimedia (CNM) included several exhibition spaces and four basic studios: digital graphics, moving image and sound, interactive systems and virtual reality. A robotic studio was to be added at a later date.

The Centro Nacional Multimedia originated, at least in part, in 1991 with a proposal to the Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes from Andrea di Castro, a visual artist who for the past ten years has championed electronic media art in Mexico. Di Castro's own practice as an artist spans a wide technological spectrum: performance, photography,

film, video, digital graphics and virtual reality. Before the opening of the centre, di Castro made available his own electronic imaging studios, IMAGIA, to a selected group of artists. But for economic and practical reasons he could not do this indefinitely and sought support from the state. His proposal was accepted in 1992 during the integration of the national schools of art into a single centre. In 1993, Xavier Covarrubias, an architect who collaborated informally with di Castro for several years, officially joined him in the design and organization of the centre.

The goal of CNM was to introduce artists to new technologies that could be used for expressive, didactic and conservation purposes. The users are primarily teachers, researchers and students at the schools in the Centro Nacional de las Artes. For artists unaffiliated with the schools, CNM offers courses in specific subjects such as digital photography and computer music and sponsors individual projects in electronic media. In addition, CNM finances publication and translations of the work of selected media theorists. When I last visited in April of 1996, two publications by Derrick de Kerckhove were in process. De Kerckhove had lectured at the centre, as had Pedro Meyer, an internationally acclaimed Mexican photographer residing in Los Angeles.

The atmosphere among administration, students and teachers at CNM was one of great enthusiasm for the new technologies. But to my surprise there was more of a McLuhanesque utopianism than critical engagement with the technology. Cultural studies and critical theory were next to unknown, as was postcolonial cultural criticism. Di Castro, a firm believer in the universal and transcendental qualities of "good" art, had a tempered attitude towards the future of electronic media art in Mexico. Because he recognized the richness of Mexico's artistic traditions, he believed that electronic media art should develop along with traditional art forms. He emphasized the need to provide artists with good quality materials to produce work, but denied that technological currency affected artistic production or the public's reception of the work. In his view, "instead of waiting three seconds for an effect in Photoshop, waiting twenty will not make a difference in the final result—it is simply a matter of convenience." The expressive quality of the work, rather than the technology, would make the work noteworthy. He also maintained that it was important for artists to work with the computers without the help of engineers and technicians. To my question of what would happen to the practice of artists who were introduced to the new technologies at the centre but no longer had access to the technology after their period of internship, he responded that access was not really a problem since home computers could be used effectively for artistic work. He admitted that access to virtual reality was more difficult but ultimately "art has never been democratic."¹⁶ Di Castro's responses were puzzling in light of his explanation that the drive to establish CNM resulted partly

from the need of a number of artists for access to electronic media, including home computers.

After the dramatic fall of the peso in 1994, the economic crises that ensued and the ultimate disgrace of Salinas de Gortari's government, CNM continued to operate but the succeeding administration of Ernesto Zedillo demanded more practical productivity from the centre and threatened to reduce funds for artistic work. In 1996, CNM's projects included documentation of Mexico's museums on CD-ROM and virtual reality simulations of archaeological sites such as Tenochtitlán and Monte Albán. Despite di Castro's and Covarrubias' indefatigable dedication and energy, the production of electronic media art in Mexico is mired in the country's battle for economic survival.

For some Mexicans during the Salinas de Gortari administration, CNM was evidence of Mexico's economic development. Digital art, its immateriality notwithstanding, was expected to play a role parallel to monumental architecture in advertising Mexico's wealth. As the economic history of Latin America painfully illustrates, empowerment depends not on the consumption of specific technologies but in the development and industrial application of scientific discourses. At present, Latin America, Africa and the Middle East are consumers of electronic media but the production of electronic technologies in these areas is almost nonexistent.¹⁷

The influence of the computer in contemporary science is paramount. Paradigms such as the parallelism between computer and brain, fractals, scientific visualization, telesurgery and mammoth projects such as the Human Genome would be unthinkable in a pre-computer era. The interdependence of technology and science adds yet another level of complexity to the integration of developing countries into the global economy. Technological diffusion is not uniform and science functions under the shadow of colonialism.

Sociologist Thomas Schott has argued that a country's participation in science is proportional to economic wealth. Despite the globalization of culture and technology, scientific inequality between poor and developed countries is even wider than economic inequality and in the past decade the gap has not narrowed but widened.¹⁸ The production of science and economic stability are so intimately related that it is difficult to determine which comes first. Scientific research contributes to economic growth. Thus, the widening of the scientific gap between rich and poor countries is likely to widen the economic gap between them, which in turn further widens the scientific gap.¹⁹ Schott is concerned with neither the subtleties of scientific representation nor the diversity of applications of scientific research. His investigation focuses on the basic requirements of science as a global institution. Some so-called "scientific" activities do not qualify as "Science." For instance, alternative therapies are viewed with great suspicion by the medical establishment, despite the scientific claims of practices such as

homeopathy. The institutional practice of science is grounded in the belief that science is universal because the validity of scientific propositions can be assessed by criteria that are universally valid. This belief that science is universal is buttressed by the requirement that scientific research should be replicable as results must be confirmed by other scientists in order to become part of scientific knowledge.²⁰

In order to participate in global science, scientists must publish in prestigious journals, usually in English. The publication of electronic journals has not changed matters much as English is both the language of science and of the Internet. The *Science Citation Index*, a useful source for judging the influence of scientists on their peers, does not include scientists from Africa or East Asia unless they publish in significant foreign journals. Further, Americans and Europeans cite each others' research much more than they cite the work of scientists from other countries, whereas scientists from so-called peripheral areas cite Americans more than they cite colleagues from their own countries.²¹

Schott's view of the diffusion of science in a "centre to periphery" model seems outdated in terms of today's emphasis on hybridity and the interpenetration of cultures in cultural criticism. It is undeniable that a succession of diasporas from so-called peripheral areas to centres have transformed world science into a "hybrid practice" and that the distinction between centre and periphery is no longer tenable. Andrew Ross, for one, has discussed the ability of institutionalized science to absorb alternative positions and conversely, the need for marginal practices to seek confirmation in scientific discourses.²² Yet, regardless of what Western science appropriates, economic profits and scientific prestige are still concentrated in the traditional imperial centres. I attribute this to the subordination of regional knowledges to Western science during the era of colonization and to the continued authority of institutionalized science in our own era.

Before the advent of European and American imperialism, non-Western cultures had established methods of abstract reasoning and the study of natural phenomena, but these became subordinated to Western science through the social and political dynamics of colonization and imperialism. Knowledge and academic disciplines originating in the imperial nations became normative and other knowledges were either eradicated or became "minor." As Dipesh Chakrabarty explains, minority and majority are not natural entities but constructions. Although the popular meaning of

the words "majority" and "minority" are statistical, often they imply the idea of being a "minor" in a given context. For instance, numerically speaking, Europeans have been a minority of the total world population for at least the past two centuries yet nineteenth-century colonialism pivoted on the idea that European history contained the norms to which every human society should aspire.²³

Institutionalized histories have reinforced the dominant position of Western science and technology by explaining its adoption by indigenous populations exclusively in terms of its superiority. Take, for example, an eminent scholar's suggestion that the Spanish conquest of the Americas took place partly because Native Americans "gravitated into the domain of European technology and Christian ethical standards, often of their own volition, as if in flight from the limitations of pre-Conquest cultural life."²⁴ In a now-classic book, Fernand Braudel recognized the worldwide diffusion of modern science and technology while stressing that some civilizations resist this sort of exchange:

There are, in fact, refusals to borrow, whether a way of thinking or believing, or simply a tool. Some of these refusals are carried on deliberately and with great clarity, while others are performed blindly, as if determined by thresholds or locks impossible to pass through.²⁵

Such exceptions are usually omitted from triumphal accounts of both colonial expansion and technological diffusion.

Science maintained worldwide authority even after decolonization because of its presumed objectivity and, ironically, because of its instrumentality in world politics. International science policy is formulated primarily by organizations such as UNESCO, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Rockefeller Foundation and the World Bank. These institutions frequently determine a country's participation in science. The Rockefeller Foundation sponsors scientific projects selectively around the world and the World Bank makes loans contingent on national science policies.²⁶ Edward Said reminds us that

there is nothing mysterious or natural about authority. It is formed, irradiated, disseminated; it is instrumental, it is persuasive; it has status, it establishes canons of taste and value; it is virtually indistinguishable from certain ideas it dignifies as true, and from traditions, perceptions, and judgments it forms, transmits, reproduces.²⁷

Technology is inscribed by and within culture. Without more active participation in the production of science and technology will it ever be possible for developing countries

and so-called "marginal" groups to alter their position of subalternity?

Thus far, my discussion has been concerned with questioning the utopian representation of electronic technologies. In this context, I have reexamined the imperialist roots of institutionalized science. I would like now to consider some possible consequences of these technologies in aesthetic realms. Like scientific practice, art is believed to have universal values. This idea, championed by Vasari in the sixteenth century and reiterated through various "universal" movements, rests on the notion that aesthetic quality is universally recognizable. Like the supposition that technology is value-free, this implies that artistic production is independent from its sociopolitical context. A belief in the universality of artistic quality thus obscures the materiality of works of art and their participation in specific social, economic and political systems.

Artistic styles known as "universal" have originated in Europe and the United States. Artists favoured by traditional art historical canons have been white and male. The canonization of works of art thus serves purposes of inclusion and exclusion as the construction of "universal" aesthetic systems has been an integral part of colonial and neocolonial domination.

In recent years, several practitioners and theoreticians, including Margaret Morse, Erkki Huhtamo, Simon Penny and Lev Manovich, have noted that value is placed on specific works primarily by virtue of the artist's use of state-of-the-art technology. But these critics discuss this issue exclusively in the context of art in developed nations. The effects of aesthetic techno-fetishism in the wider context of world art are at present largely unexamined.

When looking at computed-aided images, technologically sophisticated viewers can usually tell whether the artist is using current or antiquated technology. High-end computer art can achieve greater degrees of mimesis to the extent of making the presence of the technology invisible. In fact, earlier in this decade, computer arts were marginalized in the art world on the grounds that the computer could not produce unique objects, therefore, computer art

embodied the less desirable aspects of the polarities natural/synthetic, authentic/fake, real/artificial.²⁸

In the opinion of the late media theorist Vilém Flusser, digitization transformed all art forms into "exact scientific disciplines." Further, the aesthetic value of computer art depends on realism: from now on we will have to embrace



beauty as the only acceptable criterion of truth—"art is better than truth." This is already observable in relation to computer art: the more beautiful the digital apparition the more real and truthful the projected alternative worlds.²⁹

Flusser's statements illustrate the convergence of artistic and scientific representation in our era. According to Barbara Maria Stafford, this state of affairs had strong precedents in the late Baroque.³⁰ Yet a fundamental change has occurred during the twentieth century with the advent of the computer. Whereas diagrammatic representation was preferred to signify scientific objectivity, especially at mid-century, during the past ten years, illusionistic, high-resolution images are preferred. These no longer carry the stigma of untruth.³¹ Rather, as Flusser makes clear, the realism of digital graphics reconciles the values of truth and beauty. The computer facilitates measurability of every pictorial element offering the image to scientific scrutiny.

Lev Manovich has noted that all the dimensions in a digital image are quantified:

the number of colors in an image, the temporal resolution the system is capable of and so on can be specified in exact numbers. Not surprisingly, the advertisements for graphics

Jimmie Durham

THE CENTRE OF THE WORLD IS SEVERAL PLACES (PART II)

INTERVIEW WITH BEVERLY KOSKI AND RICHARD WILLIAM HILL



How the Mouse-girl Was Singing, Jimmie Durham, 1996.

This is the second part of an interview with artist and writer Jimmie Durham. Like Part I, it was conducted in Berlin in February, 1998.

RICHARD HILL: Can you tell me about the piece *Triptych as Sandwich*?

JIMMIE DURHAM: The first idea is from the title. I wasn't even thinking about using stone, but I was thinking about what a triptych was, that it is like a sandwich. It has these two side things that you usually close and it's the centre part that's the roast beef. You open up the two pieces of bread and you get to see how good the roast beef is. I thought all I had to do to make a triptych was to have something good in the centre and it wouldn't necessarily have to be a painting. I thought a nice sport coat, a nice cashmere sport coat would work. People are always inspecting sport coats just like roast beef. My first idea was to use two slabs of plywood and just bolt it together so that you couldn't open up the sandwich, to kind of break the idea of inspecting. One of my favorite pieces of art is the *Mystical Lamb* in Ghent Cathedral. It's a really incredible painting. It's done as a triptych and it used to be, like all these things were, a magic show. They were always closed and then the priest says "wanna see something?" and opens it up. I thought that the less often they were opened the more important they probably were. All I had to do was lock mine down and it would gain importance. I also thought that it would be another interesting way of playing with the form of art, with what art is supposed to look like.

I had a black cashmere sports coat and an ivory-coloured cashmere sports coat and I had the stones cut to fit so that the lettuce would be coming a little bit out of the stone sandwich. The third one was smaller, the stone is called imperial red granite. What's inside is an old Belgian mail sack that everyone in Belgium would recognize. That's my favorite because it's smaller and—I don't remember—but there could still be a couple of letters inside. [laughs] They would be the roast beef of the roast beef. Once I made it with stone instead of in plywood this thing happened, a thing that happens in art over and over that I think keeps us artists making art. You put two things together and they begin to speak in ways that you didn't see before. Or they are going to speak—and all sorts of new things happen that give you a nice surprise. They look more politically weighty with the stone, and the colour combination using the white marble with the black colouring, and black granite with the white coat gave it a kind of poetry about gravestones, clothes and bodies.

RH: It's interesting—as the artist you're maintaining control over the piece after it leaves you. It's not the priest that's going to be opening it...

JD: That's nice, yeah. I had several versions of it now that I think of that. As you must know, all the cathedrals of Europe have bull hide foundations, they're built on top of bull hides. I didn't want to tell that story by putting a stone on a bull hide but I thought if I could find a great huge

heavy stone and put it on a shirt, with no possibility of escaping, it would kind of free the stone because it would have the audience's desire, the desire to "Get that stone off that poor shirt!" [everyone laughs] So, the stone might fill up with the desire to leave. I would be talking about cathedrals at the same time. Transcendence is what cathedrals are for—to escape the earth.

RH: It's funny how that anthropomorphization seems to creep into your work, even when it's not obvious.

JD: You can see it maybe more in the show I did in Lund, in Sweden, last year. The pieces don't look as if they've been anthropomorphized, but you can see that they're not real art all the same. [everyone laughs] You can see they're not just aesthetic packages.

I think we often treat civilized objects as though they are civilized objects, which is close to anthropomorphizing. We're treating them as though this was the known stuff, the real, natural stuff for humans—that this is a human chair. We have these apartments which direct us, tell us how we are, they define us physically, and then we load that up even more. One of the things I say in this book from the Vienna show [*Der Verführer und der Steinerner Gast* (The Libertine and the Stone Guest), 1996] is that when we first became humans and when we first started attempting to use language, we began using metaphor—and then we went crazy and we've been crazy ever since. As soon as you invent metaphor, and therefore language, everything reminds you of everything else and that's crazy. That's the human condition, but it's really a sickness for artists though, isn't it?

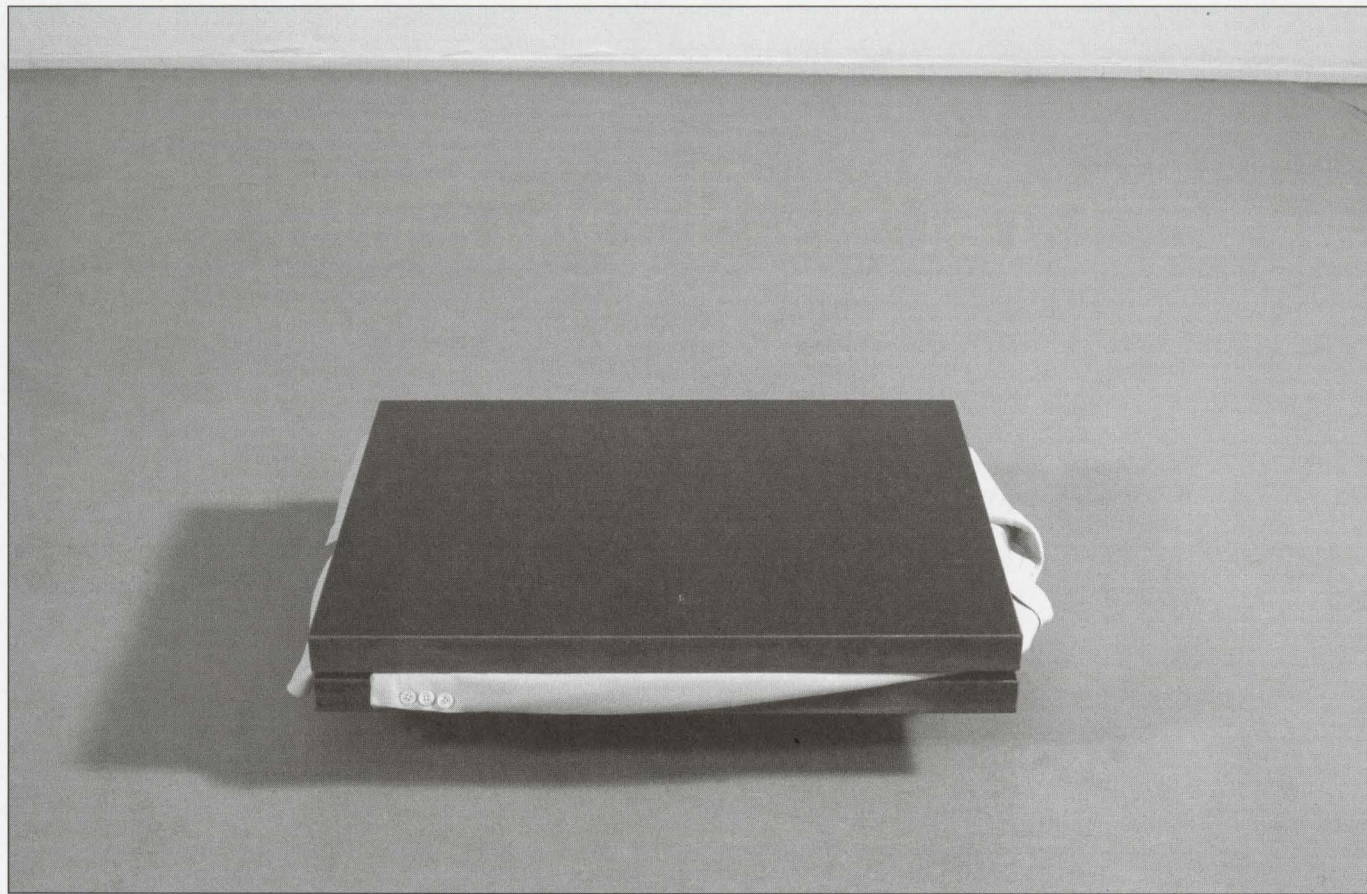
RH: I guess it's the belief that's dangerous, when you start to believe your metaphors.

JD: That's what the state does. Its prime example is not architecture, its prime example is religion. The state comes along and says that there is truth and I, the state, have this truth. Jesus really did die on the cross for your sins. It's not a metaphor, it's true and you must believe it. I'm going to kill you if you don't. By enforcing that law they invent truth and control the people at the same moment.

RH: I've always felt that I didn't want to believe in any god that insisted that I believe in him.

JD: People in Europe always want to know anthropological things and sooner or later they say "what is your religion like?" I say "Well, we don't have one. We have a lot of stories about grandmother spider, but that doesn't mean we believe there is a grandmother spider."

RH: Now people do. [everyone laughs]



triptych as sandwich, in black granite and sheep hair, 1997, black granite, wool coat, 17.3x55.4x68.3 cm.
Courtesy Galerie Micheline Szwajcer.

JD: I saw that in the Native American Church. From the '50s to the '80s was a remarkable change. In the '50s, when I was part of it, the Road Man explained clearly—because it was very much mixed with Jesus in those days—that our red path is the path, Peyote is our guide and Jesus is Peyote. This is our guide just as I am your guide, this is our correct road. It was a political statement and an obvious metaphor. By the time of the late '70s Christianity had been thrown out and the Road Man says "Peyote will save you, believe in Peyote, Peyote has the answers." They threw Jesus out and brought him in the back door.

BEVERLY KOSKI: Like saying the Great Spirit is God.

JD: Yeah.

RH: Maybe it has something to do with writing too, because it fixes things so absolutely.

Can we talk a bit more about some of the ways that you've been using stone?

JD: In Stockholm I started doing some things that didn't quite work out, but they almost worked. Some did. They are called lithographs. I do it in different ways. For example, if I want to do a lithograph using red ink I put a tube of red ink on a piece of paper and drop a stone on it. If you

drop a heavy stone on a pencil, the entire pencil is shown on your piece of paper. Other times I put paint or graphite directly on the stone and then throw the stone at paper or cloth or wood or something. They're all lithographs, which is a term I have invented. [laughs] It means making a graph using a stone.

In the show in Milano I tried to make the stone do some work. I made it do all sorts of things. Here it is spreading some toothpaste out of a toothpaste tube; it does all the kinds of work that needs to be done, walnuts cracked...

RH: [looking at a photo of Jimmie hefting a heavy stone] It looks like you're doing all the work there...

JD: ...well you have to help stones, they don't work on their own.

If there is something that is pre-art—just as a silly idea—it would be something that's not well developed, not well thought out and not serious enough, all of the things needed to be art. It doesn't mean that it's bad, it's just not art. These are seven stones that I carry around and I show them to people, usually one at a time. [he brings out seven small stones and shows them to us] My idea is that if I carry these stones around they will act as bait or something. They will help me think better about the freedom and mobility of stones. I have more amazing stones but I didn't want to use

very amazing stones and I have less amazing stones but I didn't want to use less amazing stones either. You can see very plainly, all the same, that each one stands for one of the seven directions.

RH: Obviously. [laughs]

JD: This one is the kind that they sell to tourists all over Mexico that they call Apache tears. It's the most ugly piece of racism that you can imagine. And even the Apaches now sell them as Apache tears.

RH: It's the idea of that *End of the Trail* Indian, that poor depressed Indian.

JD: ...in the Tribal Chief's office they sell them. The flinty looking green stone is called Brazilian blood stone and it has little red flecks in it.

BK: Isn't this one a polished version of this?

JD: Yeah. But it's not an Apache tear unless you polish it. It must be a Cheyenne tear or something. Or a crocodile tear. [laughs] That's from some old site that had been dug up in Mexico for a housing development. You can pick up little arrows and different things. So, showing them to people is my performance art. A small performance. When people go to the beach or the riverbank or something they always pick up pretty stones and show them to other people, and the other people never think that they're pretty. You never think that someone else's stones are pretty. You think that the person is a little dumb for liking that kind of stone—unless it's diamonds or something.

BK: Have you ever seen the shore of Lake Superior north of Minneapolis in Grand Marais? There are amazing round rock beaches that are almost impossible to walk on. I threw a rock back into the water once and my Mom gave me shit. "You know how long it took to get up there!" [everyone laughs]

JD: [pointing to a photograph] I'll tell you about this piece, there's an Italian version and a Finnish version. At one end of the gallery, there's a little rifle bullet, just put on a bracket and tied on. On the other end of the gallery there's a stone stuck to the wall, also on a bracket. It's called *A Sound Installation*. The text says to take the appropriate rifle and shoot the bullet at the stone. It acts like a cowboy bullet, it ricochets and it makes a pretty noise. It makes a sound piece just by looking at it. In the gallery in Finland it's a very large piece because the gallery is so long, it's about forty metres. As an indoor sculpture that's pretty big, forty metres.

Europe has such a sure idea about what stone is. I like the Old Testament of the Bible. I think it's got some beautiful, great stories. It's almost always stories about how the

Hebrew people are meant to be nomads. Every time that they settle, they get in trouble. It's story after story saying don't settle down and don't believe things that are happening around you because it's evil stuff. So, in Munich [at the Munich Kunstverein] I'm going to try to remake a part of Solomon's temple. I like the story of Sodom and Gomorrah. All the Hebrews that were living there were supposed to leave Sodom and Gomorrah, because the Old Testament says that they were too evil. That partly meant that they were too sophisticated, too citified, too much having a good time in their city, too many parties. God told them to walk away and don't look back, but Lot's wife did look back. The way I'll explain it in Munich, when she looked back believing the city—that's what looking back was for a nomad—she became part of the architecture. She turned to a pillar of salt but she also turned into an ornamental monument in the city, she became architecture herself, just like any other stone that has to go into the service of the state.

I want to do that piece partly because Munich is where Hitler's headquarters were, it's where the Nazi roots are, and because the Jewish story is still a counter story to the European story. It's still a story they don't like because it's so much against their own stupid story of the Egyptians met the Greeks, and the Greeks met the Romans, and the Romans met us and we invented Shakespeare and then we discovered everybody else. The Europeans always say Jews are subversive, and that's true, they are subversive to that stupid story. All over Europe they're accused of being cosmopolitan and not faithful to the state, which is a nice kind of guilt, a nice accusation.

I'm looking for ways to have a conversation with Europe without having to be a pretend European or a blatant outsider, or a token outsider. Jews do that excellently well. In France and Germany especially they're hotly discovering the concept of the other at this moment—for the first time they are considering this question, as though they never saw any Jews or Gypsies.

BK: Their concept of the other doesn't include Jews or Gypsies?

JD: It hasn't even occurred to them. They want more romantic and more distant people.

BK: Indians?

JD: Indians and Africans.

RH: But not North Africa, that's a little too close.

JD: Yeah. Aboriginals are perfect. That's the most sellable ethnicity there is.

BK: You wanted to talk about the future.

JD: We're doing a show in Caracas in '99 at Sala Mendoza. It's going to be on New Year's Eve in Caracas, which is nice. It will be the Michael Stewart Memorial Art Show. He was an art student in New York in the early '80s. He was doing graffiti art in the subways and got murdered by the police. It's Maria-Thereza Alves and I, and a certain number of mostly quite young artists, most of them are still students of one sort or another. They're people that I've met that are doing the kind of work that we want to play with in Caracas. Not graffiti art, but art that doesn't need any signs of art to it and art that doesn't need a specific place. I'm hoping that we can do things around Caracas, that we don't have to stay in the museums.

We want it to be a show about the future and therefore we want it to be a show about the past in a certain way. We want to honour Michael Stewart by saying that this is something that goes forward, that doesn't honour his memory by pretending that he's just a poor dead artist. To talk about how art might do something more and better than what the mean guys want it to do. It was kind of a nice moment in the '70s and '80s in New York City with graffiti art. In the late '70s you'd see entire painted trains that would come through. It was a great moment for the city to celebrate. And the city really did not. It hired killer dogs, it hired killer policemen and then drove all the graffiti artists inside the subways, with their black marking pens, which was quite ugly. They took a nice thing and completely screwed it up.

Maria-Thereza and I will use the book that comes out of it, and the show itself, as a way to see if we can talk about politics in an art context without having to do political art necessarily, but just putting the two things together.

Oh, someone wants me to be in show in Australia. Coming up pretty soon. They sent me a list of the artists. Is there an artist in Canada named "Inuit artist"? [everyone laughs] It's a funny show. What they told me was that they had some Indian shaman from Guatemala whose name is Running Wolf or something like that...

BK: Oh no.

JD: I thought, I've got the wrong show. I'll get this list and read it into your tape. [reads from a list which includes many internationally known artists] Ah, it's funny, Inuit has a cousin named Cuban artist.

RH: If there was "Indian artist" we could just show up and say "yeah, we're in the show."

My standard rap is that there is a growing bunch of elite gangsters who are desperately trying to tell us what is important in art

JD: Or you could put it on your résumé. It's a couple of guys organizing this in Sydney. They have some Aboriginal elder or some Aboriginal group to do a welcoming ceremony for the artists. It's a nice political business in Australia, because the Australians—not the Aborigines, the "genuine" Australians—are so completely arrogant, worse than the Americans and Canadians, a million times worse. They're sure that they're buddies with the Aborigines. They're sure of it. They're sure that these are "our Aborigines." At the same time you don't want white Australians not to try to make some gesture—but when they do it looks like women in hula skirts at the Honolulu airport welcoming you to Hawaii.

BK: I remember someone saying to a friend of mine, when they were in art school, it's good that you're Native because you have so much to make art about. [everyone laughs]

JD: A friend of mine from Portugal went to Majorca to do a show and the guy from the local newspaper's first question was, "Why are most artists gay?" [everyone laughs] And now I know the answer: because gay people have so much to make art about.

In '95, I was in New York with Gabriel Orozco and he was talking about the show I had just done at the Nicole Klagsbrun Gallery ["*Ropa Vieja* (Spring Collection)"]. He said it's time for you to stop doing art about identity. It's got nothing to do with anything anymore, the art world has gone past that, it's the '80s. He's the kind of guy that can say things and make you think that he's right, so I thought he was right, for a few months. And then I realized that he was actually saying the words of some friends of his about my work and they don't like me or my work anyway. So, it has nothing to do with anything. These same people say that to young artists; art that's about identity, or art that has your own identity involved is no longer good art, if it ever was. Well, in the first place they're all being fools to decide what is good art at this marvelous moment when you can make anything good art. You always could, but now you can see it.

When you look at Europe where I live, in Berlin, there's a giant Turkish community, and half of the Turkish community is Kurdish and hates the other half and with perfectly good reason. All different Arab groups are fighting each other about who is the most fundamentalist Muslim and the Serbian Christians are fighting these other Christians, and so on. It's partly a question of the hysteria of our moment, people feel they have to make some identity that is reality against someone else's reality. For artists not to address that in Europe would be completely strange. It is the European problem, it is the African problem, it is the Arabic problem



Words, once said, are like doors that are open, we always want to enter them, but sometimes we wait, expecting some other door to open, some other words to be said, these, for example are as good as any...., 1995.

today. To ignore it because some critic doesn't like that kind of work is really too strange. I know a lot of young artists who do the most beautiful, free things using their own identity and in extremely nice ways. That work speaks very much to our times, I think it's the most contemporary work going on. It can look the least art-like, so they can break that gangsterism of the market and the museum in a lot of little ways. I'm now deciding that in the future, I might be able to investigate and address issues of identity—partly as part of this trick about the millennium—and get smarter in the process. I might do better art. I don't have to do what I did in the '80s in New York. It's silly for me to have been made nervous by a young punk like Gabriel Orozco.

BK: I know that we interrupted you talking about the project you're doing here in Berlin with the fruit box. [see last issue]

JD: Oh yeah. The way it's displayed is the only thing that makes it worthwhile, because it's a dumb little box. I'll write a big long text about work in different ways. I have a lot of

notes but I haven't started writing yet because I want it to be extremely good, so that when you come into the gallery the box will be there on top of a device where you can listen to a tape of this text in every European language and any other language that I can get it translated into. You can pick up earphones and hear it in Turkish, and Farsi, French, Italian, all sorts of languages. It's translated and written and displayed in there too, so it's kind of like a card house, with large cards of the text. I imagine it to be a big structure with the box up on top.

I want the text to be the best writing I can do, completely engaging, so that you have no excuse not to stay there and read it or listen to it. Except no one does that in a gallery, including me. If there's a big long text piece, I skip it, because you don't expect that in a gallery. You want the visual thing, but especially now, people want the visual thing that they can get in two seconds. A five-second visual piece is too complex, I think. I want to celebrate the complexity of the actual box. I would like for there not to be a published text anywhere else for a certain amount of time, like seventy-five years or seventy-five seconds, some



Anyone who says that nature is indifferent to the pains and preoccupations of humanity knows nothing of humanity nor nature. The smallest dislike, the slightest headache, disrupts immediately the course of the stars, perturbs the regularity of the seas and tides and disaligns the skies. It is enough for one cent to be lacking from a bill due that day, for the sky to become immediately stormy in sympathy with the debtor. Skeptics who disbelieve everything say that this is nonsense, but what other explanation for such bad weather that has lasted so long., 1995.

long period of time so that the box wouldn't have to be in service to the text or vice versa. In most of the work that I do, there's some sort of little text, and usually it's a text that has nothing to do with the piece, a text that just occupies the same space and tries to interrupt the piece and the piece then tries to interrupt the text at the same time, as a way to break the expectations that people have about art. I think we are at an evil time in art experience, because people want so much to know what they're going to see before they see it, so that they already are agreed to it. It's gangsterism. It's a complicity of gangsters. Then you only have to say the little things about it, like going to see the ballet *Swan Lake*, for the one-hundredth time, you say "oh, she's not quite as good at the pas-de-deux as the woman I saw in Paris."

What I tell my—I speak about my students as though I am a teacher or something and I only have these three lecture experiences. I call them all my students because we're all still friends, but they are not really my students. Some young artist friends who are still in art school is what I mean. My standard rap is that there is a growing bunch of elite gangsters who are desperately trying to tell us what is important in art and it's more and more a tighter coalition between the collectors, the dealers, the museums and the critics. It's obvious because art is out of their control, or almost out of their control, so they try to control it more. When they let things in they try to let in only what works for their definition. They're getting meaner and meaner about it—more and more arrogant—because they can see that they're just about to crash.

Art history. It's a funny phenomenon, isn't it? Yet so many people want to jump into history. It's strange to see artists even younger than me—which I suppose is not so young, but I don't feel so old either—thinking about their past in some historical way instead of thinking about the future. Not strategically about the future but interestedly about the future. We're always pressured into thinking strategically now about art from the point of view of how to get famous.

I was in Istanbul for the Biennial and a friend's assistant hung out with us all the time. She was a very smart young woman but she said, as a kind of almost-nationalist, Turkish woman: "I don't see why we always have to speak English,

I don't see why we can't speak in our own languages," which is an odd statement because it's not speaking that makes the difference, it's listening that makes the difference. You want to listen to everything that you can listen to.

I wanted to say "What do you know about the Kurdish language, isn't it a beautiful language?" Something to interrupt her narrative a little bit.

If there's only this little European art world, now it can't even support its littleness. If it tries to stay in control by allowing some of us in, which is what it's trying to do, that's what's happening with this Mafia of the art world. What we've always had is that the anthro's would go in to all parts of the world and come back and report to Europe what everyone was doing out there. Now things are changing, I think. For the past twenty years they've said: you can speak if you speak what we know you will say, if you say what we have told you to say. It's the pow wow syndrome. It's the fancy dance. It's Indians dancing the way we were taught to dance so we stay in a place that's not our place and not viable. Therefore we stay out of the world, a place that Europe tries to control.

RH: Allowing someone to let you in just confirms their authority.

JD: Yeah, exactly. A huge amount of knowledge has been lost and other knowledge has been hidden that is just excellent for us, for humanity. If we rely on the reports of the explorers, or if we challenge the reports of the explorers, then the explorers have us.

Acknowledgments

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Beverly Koski is a visual artist.

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ERROR CODE

pp. 54–55

Story as told to Michelle Gay
by MacIntosh Quadra 605 with
the assistance of Hewlet Packard 300
on September 12, 1996

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THE MAGNIFYING EYE OF ANDY WARHOL

The Warhol Look / Glamour Style Fashion

THE ART GALLERY OF ONTARIO, TORONTO, FEBRUARY 21–MAY 3, 1998

REVIEW BY ROSA BERLAND

Organized by the Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh, "The Warhol Look" sought to position the artist as an historic force in the development of modern visual culture where the worlds of fashion, style and fine arts intersect. On display were over 500 diverse and disparate combinations of Warhol-related objects: works from the 1940s to the 1980s including paintings, illustrations, reconstructions, film and video, works by more than sixty other designers and artists and a selection of Warhol's personal belongings and collectibles. The tone was commemorative, marking Warhol's influence on and inspiration from the fashion world and Hollywood culture of his time.

While the exhibit sought to inform viewers of Warhol's historic impact on late twentieth-century style and his critical relocation of popular imagery into the fine art world, viewing this show was problematic. Warhol, ironically, has been absorbed visually and critically into our culture by the very mechanics that made him, especially the pivotally avant-garde strategy of magnification. His conceptual and formal inventions have become part of common visual currency.

Curators Mark Francis and Margery King focused on Warhol's most recognizable works in visual culture—the 1964 Brillo Boxes, the 1965 Liz silk-screen and the 1967 Marilyn Monroe screenprints—juxtaposing these ubiquitous images with less familiar works and personal objects, including Warhol's wig, his toiletries, clothing and letters. The seven rooms of the exhibition were like vaults filled with

bits and pieces from the vast Andy Warhol Museum archive. This seven-storey Pittsburgh institution focuses on large-scale works by Warhol and his milieu. The museum's extensive collection, superior curatorship and spacious installation lend credence to Warhol as the man who made pop culture images into *objets d'art* by enlarging, silk-screening and iconizing them. Warhol's place in the development of twentieth-century art and visual culture is better understood in such expansive space where immediately familiar objects such as the Campbell Soup images achieve iconic and historic scale.

Warhol had far-reaching conceptual influence and his own commercial images and artworks have become part of a common visual language. Therefore, viewing a small sampling of his work becomes a moot exercise. Similar to the original Warhol audience who were blind to the visual culture around them, "The Warhol Look" audience was also likely to be somewhat at a loss to understand Warhol's intention, not to mention his historic import.

Warhol employed the critical tactic of magnifying common "readable" objects of commercial and popular culture in order to force his viewer to address the content and iconography of familiar images. In the same vein, "The Warhol Look" presented ubiquitous and mundane things in the sacral space of a gallery. This Duchampian tactic asked the viewer to look at these objects and images and understand that their initial unremarkableness is in fact most impor-

tant. In keeping with Warhol's revolutionary re-positioning of the everyday in a gallery space, "The Warhol Look" offered the viewer the Duchampian riddle: why all the recognizable and seemingly unimportant imagery?

The exhibit traced the narrative development of Warhol's conceptual and formal style, with biographical overtones. It was divided into seven sections: Hollywood Glamour, The 1950s, Window Display, Silver Factory Style / The 1960s, Drag and Transformation, Interview, and Uptown / Downtown Style. Each section featured different periods of Warhol's life and production. The Hollywood Glamour section featured 173 images, including publicity photographs of actresses such as Marilyn Monroe and Liz Taylor from the Andy Warhol Museum archives. Warhol's childhood scrapbook was displayed like an artifact in a low glass case. In the accompanying audio recording, Warhol's brother relates that Andy would sit and stare at this album and that he wrote to stars who invariably sent the boy autographed pictures.

The 1950s room contained Warhol's early graphic work in advertising, including a collection of whimsical and charming pen and ink drawings and collages and watercolours for various ads. This room established Warhol's dynamic and clever mind, and his talent as a draftsman. The Window Display section included reconstructions by Mike Bildo, Gene Moore, Simon Doonan and William Doig of Warhol's designs for window displays, which incorporated his own art, merging



Candy Darling, Jed Johnson, Andy Warhol, Corey Tippin and Donna Jordan, Bill King, 1971.



Hedy Lamarr, Andy Warhol, pencil on paper, c. 1962. Courtesy the Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh.

the world of fine art with commercial imagery and space. Warhol addressed how location—place and space—often determines what constitutes a venerable art object or commercial image in his installation at Area, 1985, where he appeared occasionally in a window display entitled *Invisible Sculpture*. This piece was reconstructed and featured a rather smug-looking Warhol mannequin.

The most dynamic section was Drag and Transformation, which addressed the experience of glamorous imagery and showed amusing videotapes of Warhol in various states of makeup, as he is transformed into a gaudy-looking woman. The

room featured a case full of Warhol's toiletries and the pastel-coloured girdles he wore due to gunshot wounds. His wig was also mounted in a case. These strange archaeological objects addressed the common cultural experience of living and interacting with the forces of popular visual imagery. The walls also featured various glamour shots of the transvestite actress Candy Darling, whose miraculous and admirable gender-bending asked viewers to question how they read popular images, an appropriate sentiment in a time of photographic, surgical and optical manipulation—airbrushing, computer graphics, plastic augmentation and virtual reality.

A precursor to "The Warhol Look" would be Warhol's own 1969 exhibition from the storage vaults of the Museum of Rhode Island School of Design: "Raid the Icebox I with Andy Warhol." It featured unexpected objects: a wooden cabinet with shoes, decorated hatboxes, Indian blankets, umbrellas and wallpaper. This project illustrated Warhol's process of staging an interpretation, a viewing, an experience of a collection of visual objects. The curators of "The Warhol Look" similarly incited the viewer to process images and objects as part of a significant historical event. They attempted to re-create the gallery space as a forum for the contemplation and examination of the experience of visual culture. In a Warholian way, the viewer was asked to re-examine the overly visible, and thus invisible, in popular culture. This is Warhol's pivotal historical role: visual ubiquitousness, empty surfaces are the challenge. Evident things, blankness or boredom become reflecting pools wherein concepts of the mundane become crucial and formative.

In "The Warhol Look" fragments were deployed in an attempt to illustrate Warhol's importance as an artist of the modern, the man who remade images, the man who refocused our vision on objects and people in popular culture. The idiosyncratic artist is to be seen as a force of change. However, Warhol's work, his persona and his reputation have been so thoroughly absorbed into the world of popular culture that they have effectively disappeared. Warhol's ubiquitousness has become invisibility: the visible has become unseen. Indeed, there is a certain level of omnipresence of Warhol's *heimlich/unheimlich* exhibition techniques within the contemporary art world.

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SU RYNARD

Life Tests

RETROSPECTIVE OF FILM AND VIDEO WORKS
YYZ ARTISTS' OUTLET, TORONTO, APRIL 8–MAY 23, 1998

REVIEW BY EARL MILLER

This retrospective considers four selected videos by Su Rynard, one of the higher profile contributors to Toronto video and filmmaking through the '80s and '90s. The curatorial focus promisingly centres on Rynard's premise of a critical reading of gender matters in relation to materialism, militarism, and particularly, science. However, Rynard's work, rooted in the advent of artist-accessible rock video and television technology and continuing through to the present when video artists have been turning to film or broadcast television, carries a seductive commercial edge. Additionally, this media influence often seeps over to her content, causing an oversimplification of complex issues because of a rhetorical device borrowed from television culture: an ethical polarization of "bad" and "good."

Within Dialogue (Silence) (1987), although bearing common approaches of amplified noise, minimized dialogue and intentionally flat characterization, is the one video unrelated to an otherwise pervasive critique of scientific objectivity. It instead recounts the alienation of urban professionals in the late '80s. With this in mind, a blandly designed, presumably *nouvelle cuisine* restaurant appropriately sets the scene for an anonymous woman's escalating impatience with the constrictive emptiness of consumption-driven living.

She eventually sheds some of her work clothes—suit jacket, earrings, pumps and valise—in a privately significant but publicly located ritual by a freeway, presumably symbolic of a planned exit from her



Signal, Su Rynard, 35 mm, 1993, 3 min.

tiresome life. Meanwhile, her career-obsessed boyfriend or husband remains overtly uninterested in her escape plans. The suggested message is a feminist commentary on the inequity and angst that remain despite the gains made by working women.

More prominent though, is the problematic fetishization of the very material goods the woman is running away from. A table setting of multi-coloured Fiesta-style designer china, for instance, emphasizes aesthetic appeal in what momentarily reads as a formalist adulation of the artificial beauty of consumer goods. Further, the woman's life—that of an archetypal bored suburbanite—is recounted merely by setting up negative (oppressive career and lifestyle) and posi-

tive (her search for freedom) poles. This is the only psychoanalysis undertaken in a narrative ostentatiously constructed as an existential journey.

A comparable polarity, one of evil versus innocence, occurs in *Strands* (1997), a 16mm film in which the seemingly benign but actually demoniacal Dr. Helen Hesperus takes cloning to a most onerous conclusion. The video begins with Dr. Hesperus culminating her cloning experiment in the creation of Halley, who begins life as a "reflection" of her creator in a small pool.

Both the clone and cloner are blonde, white, young and attractive. This begs the question as to whether cloning in *Strands* is a metaphor for the mass media

representation of women, or whether its representation of women is in fact mimetically symptomatic of the mass media.

Conflict inevitably arises between the two women in what is a conventional dramatic narrative that even includes office humour. Halley spurns Dr. Hesperus in love and in office politics. However, she does this in apparent innocence, as many of her creator's memories, including an unrequited love, have been transferred to her. Dr. Hesperus overreacts—to say the least—destroying her kinder, gentler “manufactured” likeness. This climax forges a morally black-and-white division of science, a cruel dominating colonizer, and its victim, the liberty of individuals, as represented by the free-spirited Halley.

At the same time, however, this scenario innovatively raises the possibility that the nightmare cloning could unleash might not only arise from the greedy corporations and despotic governments populating futurists' omens, but from middle-class narcissism in a late capitalist society. However, further qualification is needed to form a jarring sociopolitical critique. For one reason, the film implies cloning is an obsession of beautiful people residing in tastefully decorated condos. Where then are class, race and gender issues? These are the real questions when it comes to what exact group may control cloning.

Unlike *Strands*, however, both *Eight Men Called Eugene* (1996) and *Signal* (1993) target a specific ideological camp—patriarchy—as bearing responsibility for the continuing ethical abuse of science. *Eight Men Called Eugene*, first of all, is a faux-documentary recounting a fictional male lineage of geneticists linking eugenic practices earlier in the twentieth-century



Strands, 16 mm, 1997, 22 min.
Photo: Guntar Kravis.

in science due to inequity. Arranging the videotape into such opposites, however, results in an analysis of genetics by way of a bad guy/good guy TV drama format.

Similarly employing visual opposites to address gender inequity in science, *Signal*, however, is more analytically cogent. The video pairs specif-

ically male and female scenes and ties them together by a common linguistic paradigm. First, a woman wearing a cumbersome viewing apparatus is having her eyes checked by a female ophthalmologist. The camera fixes on the eye-chart letters, what the woman would see through her technologically filtered vision. They represent the language of science. Then, fast edits of graphically enhanced black-and-white shots of male sailors sending coded messages by waving semaphore flags are interspersed. These suggest, by juxtaposition, a control of scientific language by men and the military. To make this clear, there is a close-up of a pair of flags crossing one of the sailor's crotches. Unlike the other included tapes and films, the simple structure of *Signal* is effective in the way it rapidly constructs a basic, open-ended framework for further ethical debate on science in relation to masculinity and militarism.

to future DNA manipulation—hence the eight “Eugenes.”

The one woman in the video, the narrator, approaches the issue only from a third-person point of view. Mixing in selected aspects of reality, including references to actual sterilization laws passed in provinces including Alberta and British Columbia, she recounts the fictional but fact-referencing scientific achievements of the eight men. She begins with Eugene Mendel—a play on the name of the botanist, Gregor Johann Mendel—who determined how inherited traits in green peas apply to human genes. Later she introduces Eugene Galton, inventor of eugenics and she finally concludes with Eugene Columbus, a “genetic navigator,” or colonist, who is ominously described as separating “normal” and “abnormal” genes. Throughout the vignettes, scientific advance in genetics is with no exception posited to be ethically unacceptable.

Stark, unflattering portraiture depicts “the Eugenes”—all with fashionably shaven heads—through black and white, circling, talking-head shots recalling prison photos. Sharply contrasting the severe depiction of the Eugenes are engaging, fanciful graphics, depicting, for instance, genetic travels through the body. Occurring within the narrative-documentary part, they even further differentiate the man/woman divide between scientists and narrator, a dualism indicative of the gender gap existing

If all of Su Rynard's videos had presented an analysis whose logical structure would benefit from archetypal characterization and a morally driven split of complex issues into opposites, a more convincing reading of scientific ethics and claimed scientific objectivity might have occurred. Had this been the case, the stylish visual eye candy of her videography and cinematography would show no indication of a favouring of commerce over rhetoric.

Earl Miller is an independent writer on the visual arts residing in Toronto.

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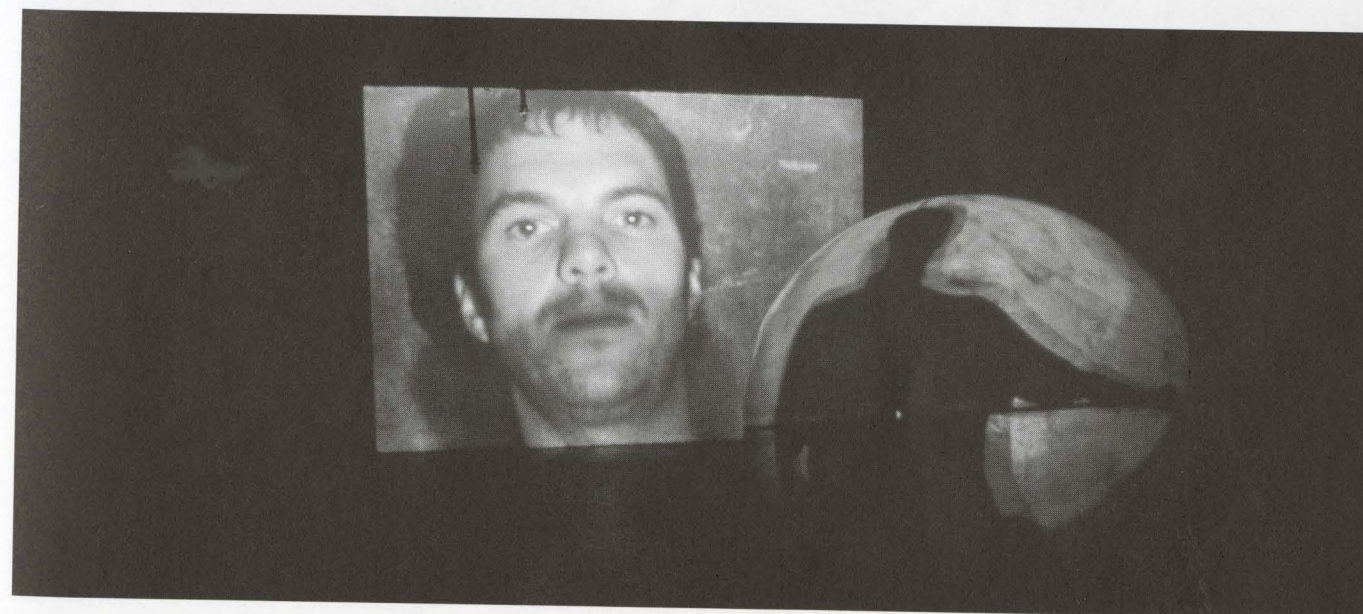
The Other Theatre, Nathan J. Walter

Counterpose. Standing at the counter, posing: an instance of the public in the private, the social in the self. Posing: a perception of one's self as self-presentation, of self as other, of one's others as self. A problematic, a proposition inverted, reversed or *détourné*. An argument, returned. These were all possibilities explored during the three-day performance event “CounterPoses,” presented in Montreal by the collective known as Display Cult, a.k.a. Jim Drobnick and Jennifer Fisher.

placed to literally put in passers-by, the storefront performance of *Hold On... I'm on My Way* by Colette kicked off an exploration of the various sites throughout the art and not-art venues within the building. This exploration was much like visiting the simultaneous openings of twelve exhibitions within a rather constricted site. In other words, viewing conditions were of the sort one finds at an opening, in a bar or at an outdoor market. This condition of overflow and mix felt distinctly thematic, an aspect of the transformation of art into cabaret akin to the Dadaists' early critique of art's isolation and purity. Such condi-

ns are made explicit in the stated curatorial objective to “focus on artistic and critical strategies that stretch conventional boundaries of the aesthetic and that engage with the corporeal aspects of experience.”

My initial tour through the building consisted of a rather quick attempt to actually see through the crowd into a variety of small rooms where many of the performances, or *tableaux vivants* to use the curators' term, were presented. During this first scan I found several compelling works and tried to find a way of viewing them given their intermittent nature and the distractions posed by viewing conditions. Certainly distanced contemplation, a conventional aesthetic proposition, was not an available or relevant option here.



Autoportrait, David McFarlane, performance still, 1998. Photo: Paul Litherland.

representation of women, or whether its representation of women is in fact mimetically symptomatic of the mass media.

Conflict inevitably arises between the two women in what is a conventional dramatic narrative that even includes office humour. Halley spurns Dr. Hesperus in love and in office politics. However, she does this in apparent innocence, as mar of her creator's memories, including an unrequited love, have been transferred to her. Dr. Hesperus overreacts—to say the least—destroying her kinder, gentler “manufactured” likeness. This climax forges a morally black-and-white division of science, a cruel dominating colonizer, and its victim, the liberty of individuals, as represented by the free-spirited Halley.

At the same time, however, this scenario innovatively raises the possibility that the nightmare cloning could unleash might not only arise from the greedy corporations and despotic governments populating futurists' omens, but from middle-class narcissism in a late capitalist society. However, further qualification is needed to form a jarring sociopolitical critique. For one reason, the film implies cloning is an obsession of beautiful people residing in tastefully decorated condos. Where then are class, race and gender issues? These are the real questions when it comes to what exact group may control cloning.

Unlike *Strands*, however, both *Eight Men Called Eugene* (1996) and *Signal* (1993) target a specific ideological camp—patriarchy—as bearing responsibility for the continuing ethical abuse of science. *Eight Men Called Eugene*, first of all, is a faux-documentary recounting a fictional male lineage of geneticists linking eugenic practices earlier in the twentieth-century

the one woman in the video, the narrator, approaches the issue only from a third-person point of view. Mixing in selected aspects of reality, including references to actual sterilization laws passed in provinces including Alberta and British Columbia, she recounts the fictional but fact-referencing scientific achievements of the eight men. She begins with Eugene Mendel—a play on the name of the botanist, Gregor Johann Mendel—who determined how inherited traits in green peas apply to human genes. Later she introduces Eugene Galton, inventor of eugenics and she finally concludes with Eugene Columbus, a “genetic navigator,” or colonist, who is ominously described as separating “normal” and “abnormal” genes. Throughout the vignettes, scientific advance in genetics is with no exception posited to be ethically unacceptable.

Stark, unflattering portraiture depicts “the Eugenes”—all with fashionably shaven heads—through black and white, circling, talking-head shots recalling prison photos. Sharply contrasting the severe depiction of the Eugenes are engaging, fanciful graphics, depicting, for instance, genetic travels through the body. Occurring within the narrative-documentary part, they even further differentiate the man/woman divide between scientists and narrator, a dualism indicative of the gender gap existing



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some viewing apparatus is having her eyes checked by a female ophthalmologist. The camera fixes on the eye-chart letters, what the woman would see through her technologically filtered vision. They represent the language of science. Then, fast edits of graphically enhanced black-and-white shots of male sailors sending coded messages by waving semaphore flags are interspersed. These suggest, by juxtaposition, a control of scientific language by men and the military. To make this clear, there is a close-up of a pair of flags crossing one of the sailor's crotches. Unlike the other included tapes and films, the simple structure of *Signal* is effective in the way it rapidly constructs a basic, open-ended framework for further ethical debate on science in relation to masculinity and militarism.

If all of Su Rynard's videos had presented an analysis whose logical structure would benefit from archetypal characterization and a morally driven split of complex issues into opposites, a more convincing reading of scientific ethics and claimed scientific objectivity might have occurred. Had this been the case, the stylish visual eye candy of her videography and cinematography would show no indication of a favouring of commerce over rhetoric.

Earl Miller is an independent writer on the visual arts residing in Toronto.

COUNTERPOSES

Re-concevoir le tableau-vivant

A PRESENTATION OF DISPLAY CULT

OBORO, MONTREAL

PERFORMANCES MAY 7, 8 & 9, 1998

REVIEW BY STEPHEN HORNE

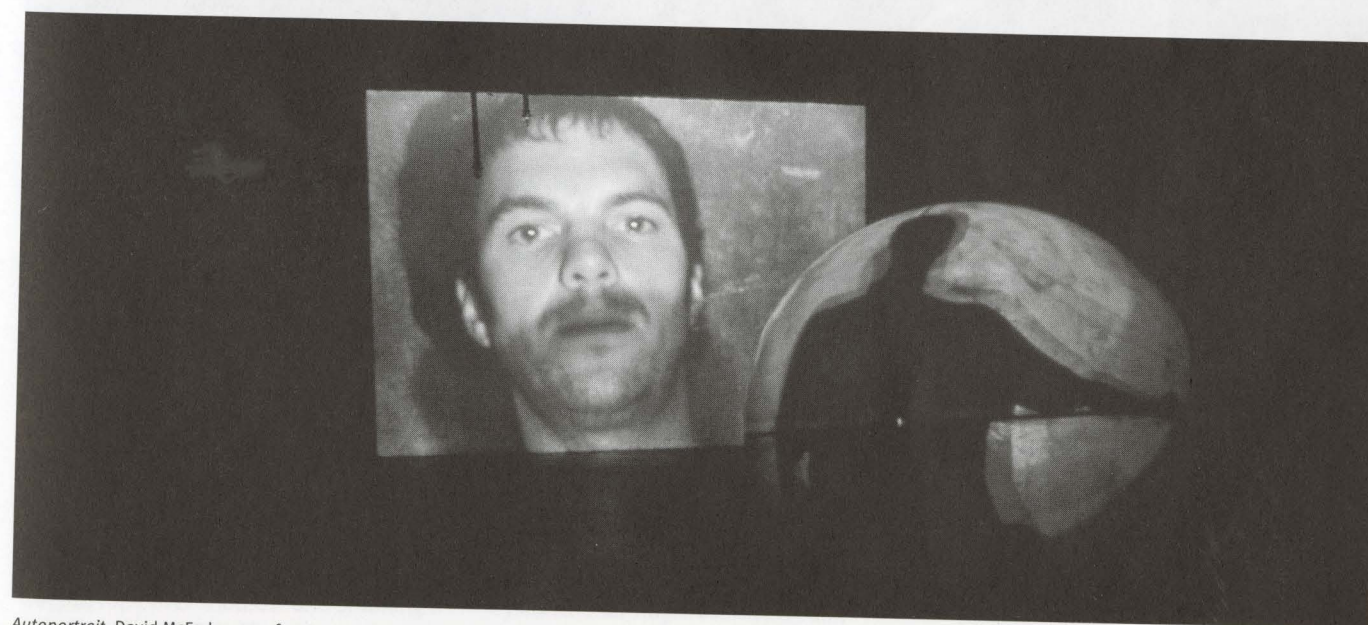
Artists: **Stéphanie Beaudoin, tarin chaplin, Colette, Kim Dawn and Christof Migone, Shawna Dempsey and Lorri Millan, Rachel Echenberg, Nathalie Grimard, Louise Liliefeldt, Christine Martin, David McFarlane, The Other Theatre, Kathryn Walter**

Counterpose. Standing at the counter, posing: an instance of the public in the private, the social in the self. Posing: a perception of one's self as self-presentation, of self as other, of one's others as self. A problematic, a proposition inverted, reversed or *détourné*. An argument, returned. These were all possibilities explored during the three-day performance event “CounterPoses,” presented in Montreal by the collective known as Display Cult, a.k.a. Jim Drobnick and Jennifer Fisher.

The manifestation of this event in a small three-floor ex-industrial building in Montreal's trendy residential/consumer district known as The Plateau offered a site accessible to a mix of viewers. Strategically placed to literally pull in passers-by, the storefront performance of *Hold On... I'm on My Way* by Colette kicked off an exploration of the various sites throughout the art and not-art venues within the building. This exploration was much like visiting the simultaneous openings of twelve exhibitions within a rather constricted site. In other words, viewing conditions were of the sort one finds at an opening, in a bar or at an outdoor market. This condition of overflow and mix felt distinctly thematic, an aspect of the transformation of art into cabaret akin to the Dadaists' early critique of art's isolation and purity. Such condi-

tions are made explicit in the stated curatorial objective to “focus on artistic and critical strategies that stretch conventional boundaries of the aesthetic and that engage with the corporeal aspects of experience.”

My initial tour through the building consisted of a rather quick attempt to actually see through the crowd into a variety of small rooms where many of the performances, or *tableaux vivants* to use the curators' term, were presented. During this first scan I found several compelling works and tried to find a way of viewing them given their intermittent nature and the distractions posed by viewing conditions. Certainly distanced contemplation, a conventional aesthetic proposition, was not an available or relevant option here.



Autoportrait, David McFarlane, performance still, 1998. Photo: Paul Litherland.

At least one work availed itself of the sort of participatory engagement developed in sculpture by artists such as Lygia Clark, Bruce Nauman or Mowry Baden. This was the piece *Autoportrait* by David McFarlane, a work that certainly focused on the corporeal aspects of experience. Enclosed in a two-metre diameter sphere that lay on the floor like a giant ball, a human figure was only very vaguely discernible through the fibreglass skin or shell of the sphere. Reinforcing this impression of a body within the sphere, an image, possibly a self-portrait, was projected on the end wall of the very dark room. This projection presented a full close-up view of a blinking, twitching, breathing face and invited explorations as to its source. The sphere also invited interaction of a physical sort, round and available for rolling as it so obviously was. Strangely enough, the face in the projection remained upright

and almost unmoved in spite of having been inverted inside the sphere by being rolled. One wondered how the interior image could be externalized without visible wiring; there was a sense of autonomy of the sphere as it intersected with the projection on the wall, contingent and relative to the sphere. In good phenomenological style, McFarlane's attitude and posture inside the sphere was strongly perceivable as a "felt sense" rather than a conceptual schema, although the work's circuit through the video device clearly disavowed any claim of priority for direct experience, of full presence. Instead, the self-portrait is a shifting and contingent outcome of the various relationalities lived in the circuits between viewers, artist and technological mediation.

A couple of other impressive works availed themselves of similar modes of

exploring experience and audience contact. Interestingly, these works relied on a certain "passivity" on the part of the artists, reaching an extreme in the work of Nathalie Grimard, who slept her performance in a hospital bed. Although disconcerting, sleeping as art is not entirely unknown. For example, in Montreal a few years ago Abramovic slept or simulated sleep, high on a shelf above the audience throughout her *vermissage*. Chris Burden slept, James Luna slept, and their states of passivity raged in the face of institutional authority. These works encourage us to rework the dualism of action and passivity that so marks Western and patriarchal culture. Of course, as Grimard's work included a hospital bed and equipment, a scenario of illness or injury was created, leading to the romantic but perhaps not so inaccurate portrayal of the artist, at least in



Separate, Kim Dawn & Christof Migone, performance still, 1998. Photo: Paul Litherland.
All photos courtesy Display Cult and Oboro.

Ethel—Forgive Me Not, Louise Liliefeldt, performance still, 1998.
Photo: Paul Litherland.

the symbolic, as an unwell or damaged person.

It may also be the exhibition concept itself that so focused works on passivity, the *tableau vivant* having been best exemplified in the past by artists such as Gilbert and George who often stood motionless for hours, performing in bronze paint and simulating statuesque poses. In "CounterPoses" at least two performances, Shawna Dempsey and Lorri Millan's *Eaton's Catalogue (1976)* and Rachel Echenberg's *Water Nymph Project* relied more strictly on the sense of living sculpture as conceptual frame. In both these performances, women presented themselves as fountains, Echenberg on the side of classicism and Dempsey/Millan expressing a certain love of pop/consumerism. While Dempsey/Millan held their

role as catalogue mannequins throughout the duration of their performances, Echenberg frequently broke hers to converse with passersby. If it was her intent to reinsert art into life, this intention was undermined by a lack of understanding of the status and role of illusion in the making of an artwork, resulting in a mere collapsing of art into literality, into the mundane space of everyday chit-chat.

Louise Liliefeldt presented what was the most architecturally integrated piece. Her *Ethel—Forgive Me Not*, in which she installed herself into the overhead space of a staircase, was distinctly physical and bodily. Taking on the role of a bowsprit figure on a sailing ship, she faced squarely and fiercely into a wind, hair blown back, permanently pulling a great weight, rope over shoulder and straining



forward. This disturbing and evocative piece gathered the liminality of the stairway space into its meditation on the burden of identity. *Recreation*, a staged piece by The Other Theatre, also made use of found features of the building, in this case integrating the intermittent presence of a large freight elevator within which two performers played out the anxious banality of domestic environments.

Last in my trajectory, but by no means least, was the fabulously viscous performance of Kim Dawn and Christof Migone. Those feelings of revulsion that so mark our fears of becoming fluid are given a very precise embodiment in this provocative and rigorous work. Presented in a small dark room into which electric light intermittently flickered from an almost dysfunctional single overhead bulb,

Separation could disturb Kristeva herself with its evocation of dangerous fluidity, of flows, pollution and loss of stability. While one participant immersed himself headfirst into a bucket of slime which could only have been honey, the hooded co-performer sat mutely, slowly carving round and round a book-shaped piece of material with a large knife. Equally obsessively, this same performer peeled fruit, perhaps plums, sucking and drooling the viscous body of the fruits. In slow time, this performance entirely permeated the space and the bodies of anyone watching. *Separation* was impossible; the persistence with which it oozed through pores, under my/our skin was an entirely captivating argument for "intersubjectivity" as a way of understanding the reciprocity of relations between maker and made, of self and other.

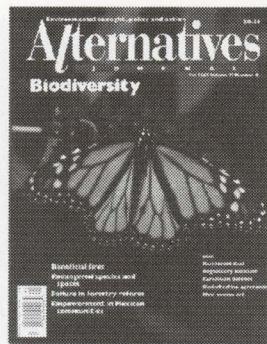
In fact, McFarlane's and Dawn/Migone's works manifested what I take to be the primary relevance of the "CounterPoses" event, that is, to open a reconsideration of the banishment of performance because of its emphasis on artistic presence, on the body as subjectivity. Much criticism of body art was prescriptive, Mary Kelly's for example, and it has now become a pressing task to reconsider what was thrown out by authoritative materialist and poststructuralist criticism during the '70s. "CounterPoses" makes a contribution to this task with Display Cult's stated aim to "engage with the corporeal aspect," an objective that reopens the debate concerning subjectivity as embodiment.

Stephen Horne is an artist and writer living in Montreal.

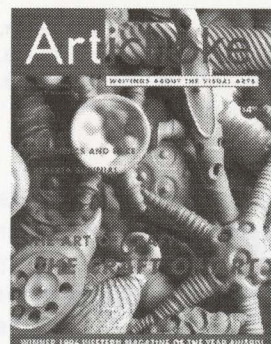
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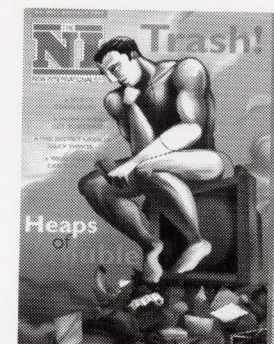
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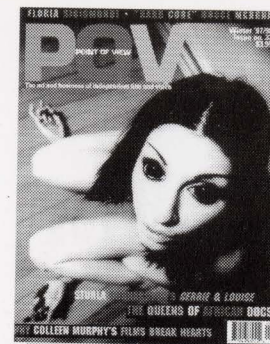
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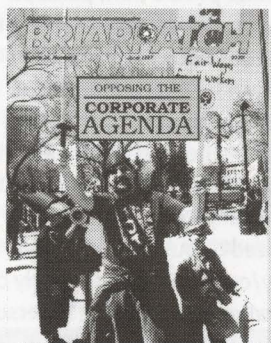
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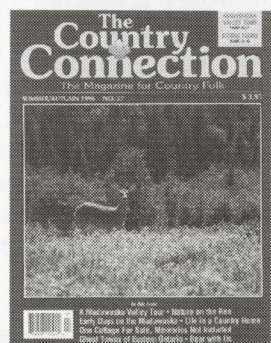
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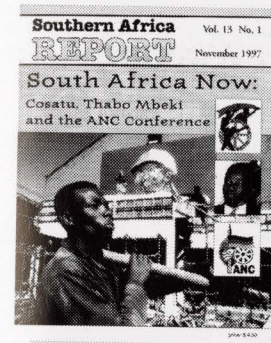
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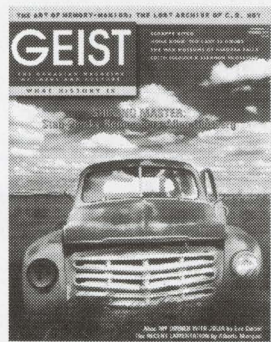
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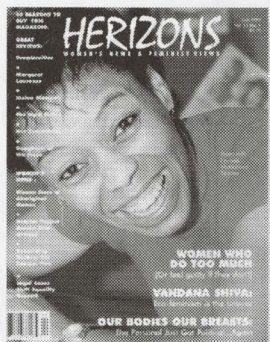
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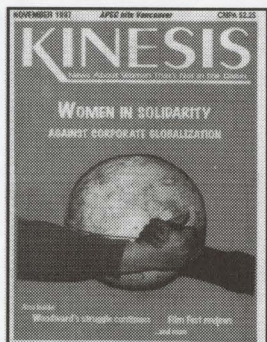
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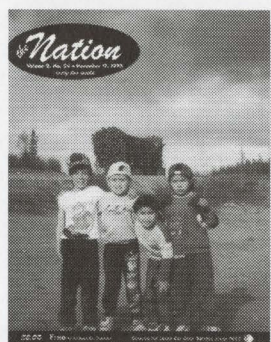
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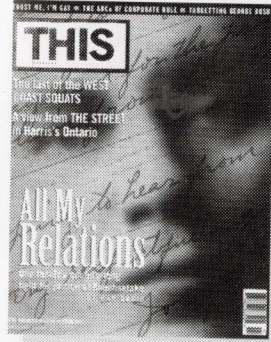
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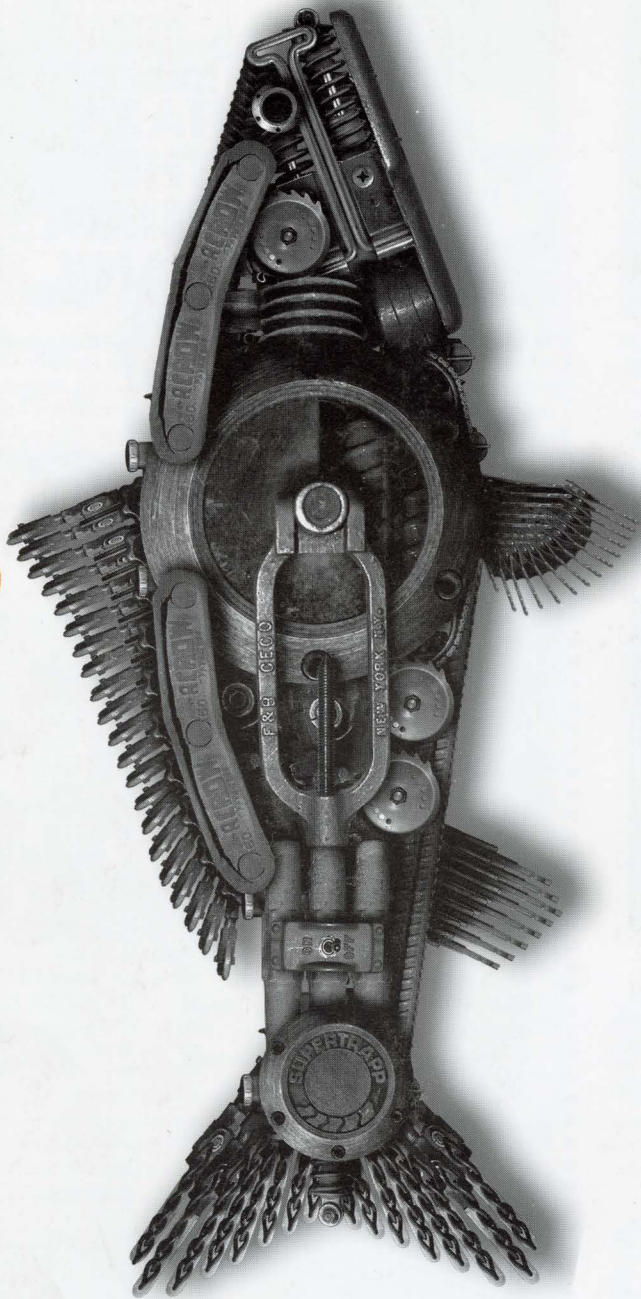
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