Volume 30 Number 2 $5.50

ART MEDIA POLITICS

FUSE MAGAZINE

Jonathan Culp on the "Appropriationists"

Ashok Mathur and Rita Wong on Equity in Canada's Art Institutes

and Statements on Precarity

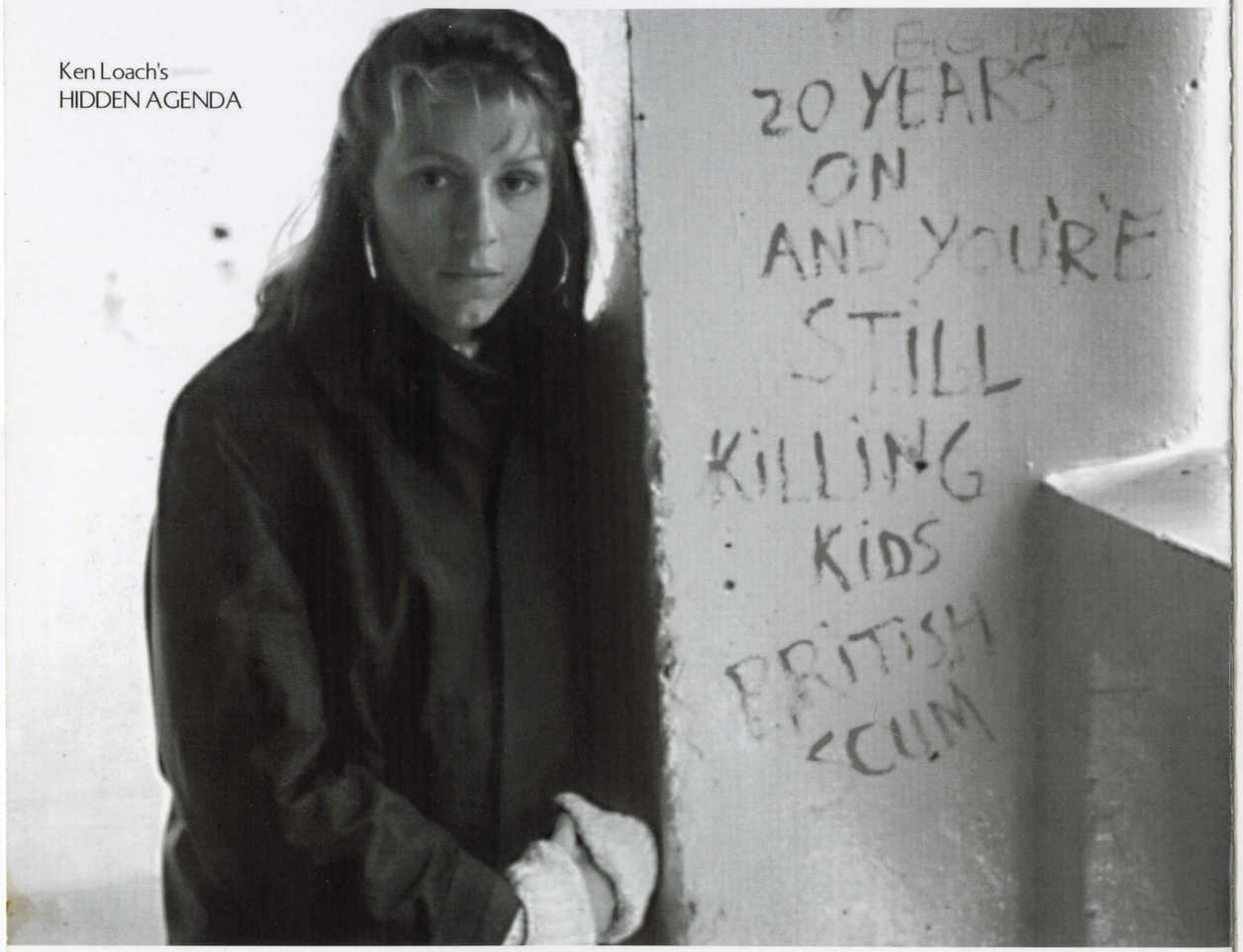
www.fusemagazine.org

TORONTO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL GROUP presents

CINEMATHEQUE ONTARIO

WIND OF CHANGE: THE CINEMA OF KEN LOACH

Ken Loach's
HIDDEN AGENDA



March 23 – May 12

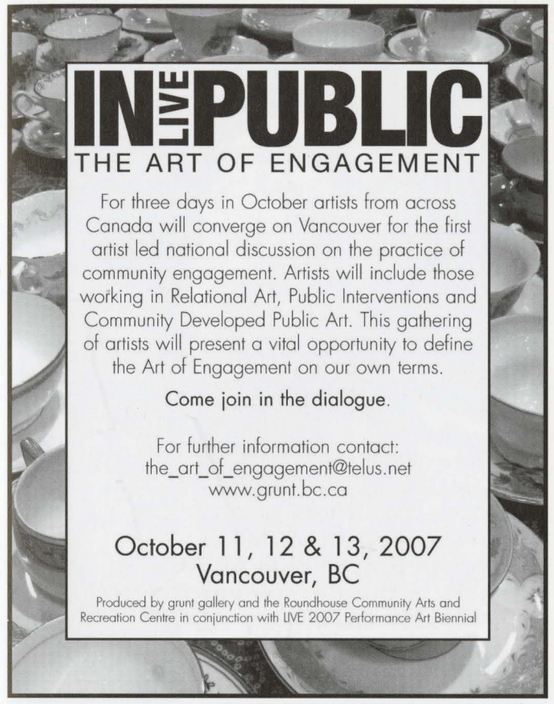
Get your tickets today!

(416) 968-FILM
cinemathequeontario.ca

Bell · Ontario Media Development Corporation · Canada Council for the Arts · Conseil des Arts du Canada

tiffg.ca

Transforming the way people see the world



IN PUBLIC LIVE

THE ART OF ENGAGEMENT

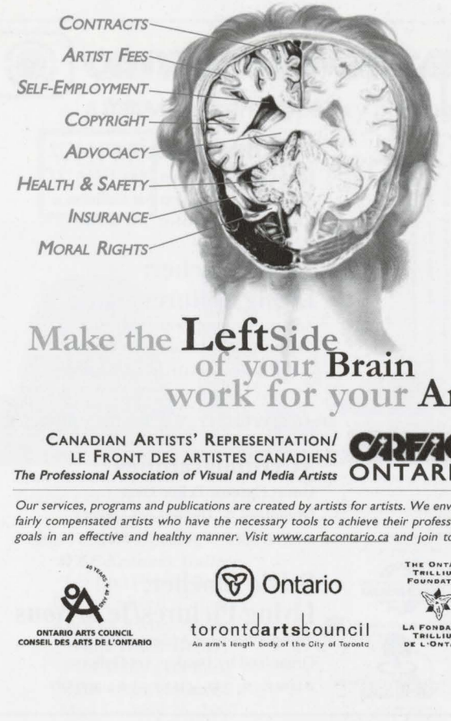
For three days in October artists from across Canada will converge on Vancouver for the first artist led national discussion on the practice of community engagement. Artists will include those working in Relational Art, Public Interventions and Community Developed Public Art. This gathering of artists will present a vital opportunity to define the Art of Engagement on our own terms.

Come join in the dialogue.

For further information contact:
the_art_of_engagement@telus.net
www.grunt.bc.ca

October 11, 12 & 13, 2007
Vancouver, BC

Produced by grunt gallery and the Roundhouse Community Arts and Recreation Centre in conjunction with LIVE 2007 Performance Art Biennial



Make the LeftSide of your Brain work for your Art

CANADIAN ARTISTS' REPRESENTATION/
LE FRONT DES ARTISTES CANADIENS
The Professional Association of Visual and Media Artists
CARFAC ONTARIO

Our services, programs and publications are created by artists for artists. We envision fairly compensated artists who have the necessary tools to achieve their professional goals in an effective and healthy manner. Visit www.carfacontario.ca and join today!

ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL
CONSEIL DES ARTS DE L'ONTARIO

Ontario

torontoartscouncil
An arm's length body of the City of Toronto

THE ONTARIO TRILLIUM FOUNDATION
LA FONDATION TRILLIUM DE L'ONTARIO

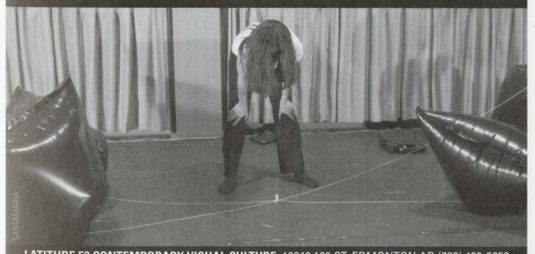
SPRING 2007 **LATITUDE 53 CONTEMPORARY VISUAL CULTURE** PRESENTS

53 WAYS TO LEAVE YOUR LOVER
Latitude 53 Spring Fundraiser, March 24

ELVIRA SANTAMARIA
Co-production with FADO, March 26-31

STEM CELL
Co-production with Metro Cinema and FAVA, April 11-15

VISUALEYEZ 2007
8th Annual Performance Art Festival, May 18-28
Curated by Todd Janes, exploring the theme of THE CITY



LATITUDE 53 CONTEMPORARY VISUAL CULTURE: 10248 106 ST. EDMONTON AB (780) 423-5353
WWW.LATITUDE53.ORG INFO@LATITUDE53.ORG

LATITUDE 53
CONTEMPORARY VISUAL CULTURE

Canadian Heritage · Patrimoine canadien

Canada Council for the Arts · Conseil des Arts du Canada · Alberta Foundation for the Arts · edmonton arts council

Burrow
Janice Kerbel, Adriana Kuiper, Liz Magor, Samuel Roy-Bois
Oakville Galleries at Centennial Square

Monika Napier
mad, mad, mad, mad world
Oakville Galleries in Gairloch Gardens
Organized and circulated by the Kenderdine Art Gallery at the University of Saskatchewan

Og2
Oakville galleries
in Gairloch Gardens
1306 Lakeshore Road East
at Centennial Square
120 Navy Street
Oakville, Ontario
tel 905.844.4402
fax 905.844.7968
<info@oakvillegalleries.com>
www.oakvillegalleries.com

FUSE MAGAZINE

Volume 30 Number 2 April 2007

Cover image: Marinko Jareb, *Skateboarding the Skies from Helsinki to Toronto*, in *big life '04*, 2004, collage. Courtesy: the artist.

FUSE is published four times a year by Artons Cultural Affairs Society and Publishing Inc., a non-profit artists' organization. All inquiries and return of undeliverables to the following address:

Artons Cultural Affairs
454-401 Richmond St W
Toronto ON M5V 3A8 (Canada)
email: subscriptions@fusemagazine.org
tel: (416) 340-8026

Publications Mail agreement No. 1396609
Registration No. 8623
ISSN 0838-603X

Subscription rates: $24 per year; Institutions $36 per year (in Canada only). Outside Canada $28 U.S. per year, $36 International; Institutions $48 U.S. Decisions regarding who qualifies as an individual subscriber remain the right of the publisher.

Printed in Canada by Sonic Print Management.

FUSE is indexed in the Alternative Press Index and ARTbibliographies Modern, and is distributed by, and a member of, Magazines Canada (416 504 0274). FUSE acknowledges the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Publications Assistance Program and the Canada Magazine Fund toward our mailing, editorial, production, and project costs. We also acknowledge financial assistance from the Canada Council for the Arts and the Ontario Arts Council. Finally, we are grateful for the many hours of volunteer and partially paid labour that are provided by everyone listed on our masthead, and some not so listed.

Canada Council for the Arts | Conseil des Arts du Canada

Canada

ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL
CONSEIL DES ARTS DE L'ONTARIO

contents 30.2

The Politics of Equity

This issue of Fuse deals with the processes of establishing equity not only within our institutions but also within our communities. As we have explored in past issues, equity work must address the politics of identity, the role that institutions play in perpetuating oppression, the necessity of self-representation and the value of an integrated analysis.

In the last issue of Fuse, we examined economic and social precarity, a condition of instability that threatens every aspect of social existence. As a follow-up to the issue, we hosted an event in collaboration with the Toronto School for Creativity and Inquiry and precarity-canada. This brought together members of arts, activist and community organizations to make statements on how they are both affected by precarity and are fighting back against it. Representatives of groups ranging from CARFAC Ontario to the Workers Action Centre spoke about their experiences and tactics. The diversity of responses, as Gita Hashemi notes in her introduction in the follow-up piece *Statements on Precarity*, opens a critical space for reflecting on the relationship of creative practice and socio-political activism. She cautions, however, that "naming does not the reality start" and ultimately, although there are more middle-class people being pushed into precarious ways of living and articulations are important catalysts to social and discursive change, precarity is nothing new.

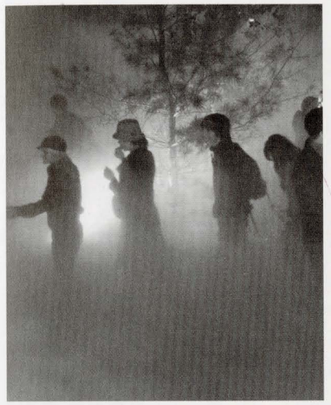
In the related artist project *Hazard Recognition* by Nahed Mansour and Louise Lillefeldt, the artists "critique the systematic exploitation of poor and racialized bodies." They describe their work as attempting to capture "the heart and soul of people who lack the resources and support of the local and global community to live a life free from discrimination and poverty."

In March, the United Nation's Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination criticized the Canadian government for employing the category of "visible minority," which they stated, *may* in itself be a discriminatory distinction. No need to qualify this prospect with possibility. In many ways, this term is typical of Canadian politesse (as aptly noted by Adrian Blackwell in issue 29.1), stating equality under the policy of Multiculturalism, while implying an invisible majority through distinctions such as "visible minority."

In Ashok Mathur and Rita Wong's report back on a year long study that looked into the effectiveness of implemented equity policy in Canadian Art Institutes, they argue that we need to unpack the ways in which multiculturalism circulates people of colour around an undeclared white centre by reorienting it to speak to historical and contemporary power relations, especially in relation to indigenous communities. Asserting that art colleges need to take anti-racist and anti-oppression pedagogy and practice into the fibre and fabric of their spaces, they insist that the problem is systemic. It is not just inadequate gains through employment equity, but eurocentric curriculum, lack of student support, inadequate funding, untenable labour conditions and disconnectedness with communities underserved by art schools. Mathur and Wong offer some concrete recommendations based on their research.

The inclusion of the interests and values of artists across disciplines in community decision making is addressed by Jonathan Culp in *Cutting out Collage*, where he examines the impact of copyright law on collage artists as well as the effect that the debate over appropriation has on the relationship between CARFAC National and the many artists the organization represents. He questions the logic of CARFAC supporting the "intellectual property boosterism" that he argues "flies in the face of solidarity across sectors and nations." Culp asks us to consider this question: "Does the art market with its preposterous system of values really represent something Canadian artists want to perpetuate?"

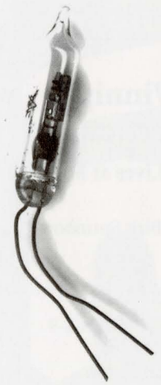
Izida Zorde



Dear Fuse,
Re: Nuit Blanche review

I was quite disappointed in Leah Sandals' review of Nuit Blanche in the last issue of Fuse, which doesn't entertain the possibility that the presentation of art as such basically functions to legitimate the "smooth, uninterrupted development" of the corporate capital and city governance agendas in urban socio-economic reconfigurations/redevelopments (i.e. gentrification) and the whitewashing/erasing of meaningful/resistant difference and diversity (i.e. erasure of counter-culture and diversity through appropriation under city-corporate banners). In a globally competitive market for attracting capital investment and cultural distinction, cities use public art as both resource and symbolic capital. It is too naive to assume that public art that gets entangled in the web of spectacular production that Nuit Blanche was, could be capable of being much more than a mega publicity stunt, be it in Toronto, Paris or New York. The reviewer doesn't go far enough in questioning the multi-layered economic and power relations between the city, the corporate sector and the arts community, the curatorial apparatus and the participating artists (invited and open call), and the artists-as-attraction and audiences-as-consumers.

Goli Moradi
Toronto, Ontario



Thinking of contributing to Fuse?

Well, you should.

Send your proposals to our editorial committee on anything that catches your fancy … after checking our online contributor guidelines, of course. We'll get back to you.

www.fusemagazine.org/write.html

Cutting Out Collage:

CARFAC and the License to do Business

by Jonathan Culp

My friend Stinky Marinky, the Croatian Sensation, makes book art. Within the pages of discarded hardcover novels he pastes words and pictures from newspapers, gig posters, porn magazines, food packages, scraps of paper blowing down the street. The arrangements are sometimes dense and sometimes thin, sometimes funny and sometimes ambiguous; the collages transform the meaning of the source, or they don't. But they are always touching and ingenious; they remind me of a collage-format diary, except they follow no narrative or timeline that an outsider could access.

A couple years ago, one of Stinky's art books was accepted into an exhibition at Rodman Hall, one of Niagara Region's tonier arts establishments. On delivering his work to the venue, he was greeted by a fellow who took his book and flipped through it. Getting excited, he exclaimed to Stinky Marinky, loudly and repeatedly:

"That's not art!"

So in case this gentleman or his soulmates are reading, let's say it loud.

Collage art is art. Collage artists are artists.

Some people would deny us even that small dignity. And some of those people are artists themselves.

Previous page image: Marinko Jareb, *Skateboarding the Skies from Helsinki to Toronto*, in *big life '04*, 2004, collage. Courtesy: the artist.

Within this context, our story unfolds …

It is June 2006. Stephen Harper and "Canada's New Government" are half a year into their mandate, and the Ministries of Heritage and Industry are receiving advice about reforms to Canada's copyright law. America's (not so new) government is on the phone of course, but so are myriad domestic lobby groups such as the Canadian Recording Industry Association, the Creators' Rights Alliance and Canadian Artists Representation (CARFAC). The Liberals' Bill C-60 may have died with their government, but these diverse voices continue to advance its agenda: new, more stringent controls on users' rights, to benefit and underwrite the professional producers of art and culture.

Meanwhile, a new organization has set out to advance a different argument: Appropriation Art, "a coalition of arts professionals," presents a petition to parliament. In a mere three weeks, this modest initiative has secured over 600 endorsements, including many individual artists and curators as well as the Independent Media Arts Alliance, the Canadian Museums Association and regional media arts cooperatives such as the Calgary Society for Independent Filmmakers and the Liaison of Independent Filmmakers of Toronto.

Their petition centres around three principles: first, that Canadian law unfairly favours copyright owners over users and creators; second, that the law's Fair Dealing legal provision is inadequate and should be enlarged; finally, that the government should not criminalize the circumvention of digital anti-copying technology. The petitioners request a meeting with Heritage Minister Bev Oda to discuss these issues and their impact on the cultural community.

The meeting is not forthcoming, but the statement draws attention and there is soon a rebuttal from the national offices of CARFAC. Founded in 1968, with a mandate to "promote a socio-economic climate that is conducive to the production of visual arts in Canada," CARFAC has won such battles as the right to exhibition fees from public art galleries, the recognition of artists as the primary producers of culture and the institutionalization of "moral rights" to protect artists from exploitation. With independent regional affiliates in several provinces and territories, they have spent decades working to organize and bargain on behalf of the country's professional visual and media artists — including those artists whom the Appropriation Art petition represents.

CARFAC's response, entitled "Copyright Law and the Visual Artist," starts by asking, "What do artists want from copyright reform?"[1] They assert that current Canadian law does not protect "appropriation without permission under *any* circumstances," which is in artists' best interests. They continue to encourage further restrictions on use, including paying artists for resale of their work and bringing Canada "in line with World Intellectual Property Organization agreements." In response to collage artists' concerns about the legal reforms eradicating their practice, they advise artists "to seek permissions, to pay the contributors and to credit them."

In spite of those 600 signatures, this is CARFAC's contrary verdict on what "artists want from copyright reform." It is authoritative — they speak for *all* artists, for that is who CARFAC exists to represent…right?

As a collage artist myself, I admit that the language of the lobbyists, with their calculated appeal to power, is not my own. I do, however, understand the passions that motivate such efforts. I care deeply about my own and other's ability to continue making the art we choose autonomously and without official sanction. This includes the right to transgress hegemonic moral codes, the right of quotation and critique — including the critique of other artists' public work — and the basic right to deny the supremacy of the market in choosing our aesthetic approaches. These objectives are notoriously hard-won and fragile; and in my opinion CARFAC's handling of this issue does them violence. It is reductive, distorted and appallingly political.

Let's close our eyes and imagine a magical time machine with which intellectual property enthusiasts may traverse the ages to enact their vision of artistic justice via "permissions."

Let's close our eyes and imagine a magical time machine with which intellectual property enthusiasts may traverse the ages to enact their vision of artistic justice via "permissions." First stop is post-revolutionary Russia, where Lev Kuleshov is forced to stop inventing montage because he can't afford to pay royalties to Hollywood. Then back to Spain 1614, where they track down Tordesillas and destroy his unauthorized sequel to "Don Quixote" — without whose inferior work, Cervantes would never have written his own Part Two. Zap ahead to the National Film Board studios of the early 1960s, where they can revoke collage genius Arthur Lipsett's sole bargaining chip — economy — and thus remove him entirely from film history. Drop by The Twilight Zone club to prevent Kool Herc from inventing breakbeats … up a couple decades to light the Plunderphonics bonfire

Richard Kerr, *collage d'hollywood*, 2003, film still. Courtesy: the artist.

Remember the Christian Right's derogatory invective against "homosexualists?" Well now RAAV, with considerable sniffing, brings us the "appropriationists."

for John Oswald … whip back to 1937 to render unfeasible Joseph Cornell's pioneering collage film "Rose Hobart." And for their last number, CARFAC can explain to Marcel Duchamp that his Mona-Lisa-with-a-mustache may be subversive and all that, but as their missive states, "there is no culture that is free of cost."

Duchamp would have drawn a big bushy one on that phrase, seeing as he did the insidious cost that "official" culture exacts from artists. It is telling that CARFAC justifies its stance on permission by reference to the film industry: "Witness the huge lists of credits at the end of most films." Just so: film and television are overwhelmingly the least democratic and most corporate of all the arts — or rather, the ones where the challenge from below is least fulfilled on an institutional level — and those endless credit rolls embody this state of affairs in documentary and fiction alike. Lawyers are expensive.

Mainstream media make hay out of enforcing the one-way traffic of corporate speech, propagating this ideology to unsuspecting victims. A friend of mine who teaches film found his students angrily rejecting a collage-editing exercise on moral grounds — what right did they have to use the images of others, even if the product will never be seen publicly? Better, I suppose, that the public university should shower licensing fees on the private broadcaster, often to the tune of $200 a *second*. Those sobbing grips in the movie ads have clearly done their assigned job of inciting moral panic. What better model for an initiative whose bottom line is not liberty or diversity or quality of expression but control?

To their credit, CARFAC has previously shown the ability to disentangle the interests of "artists" and "owners," but I see no such nuance in their response to Appropriation Art, for whom this distinction is everything. The vast majority of collage work, after all, draws on commercially licensed multiples, for which the concept of moral rights simply does not apply under the law. Just what is going on here?

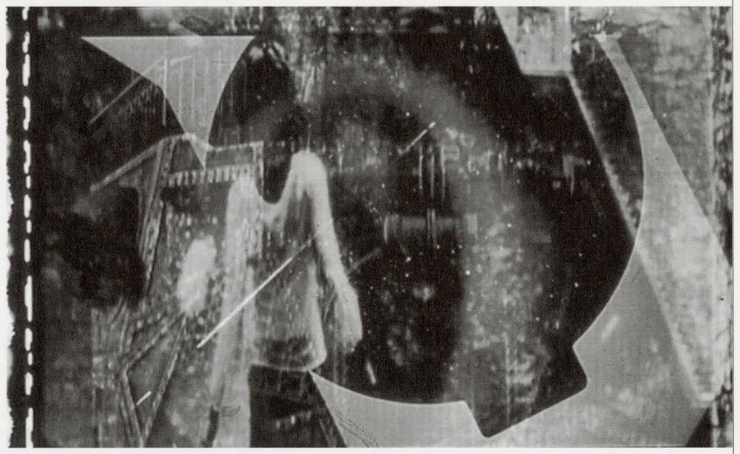
Fast forward to 2006 September. After failing to secure a dialogue with Bev Oda, the Appropriation Art Coalition have now been trying for months to secure a dialogue with CARFAC's national office. Instead,

Joyce + Duggan, *Drift*, 2006, 3 screen video projection. Courtesy: the artists.

there are more bitter statements and counterstatements, circulated online. In spite of efforts at mediation by CARFAC's Ontario office, there has been no meeting.

Late in the month, the Creators' Rights Alliance hosts the soon-to-be-legendary CopyCamp, a lively so-called "unconference" that features among its attractions over two dozen sessions explicitly concerned with appropriation practice. It is here that CARFAC and Appropriation Art finally meet in dialogue. After a tense but relatively constructive engagement, in which CARFAC articulates their fundamental support for artists who practice collage, Appropriation Art requests a public statement to that effect.

Four months and one AGM later, no such statement has been made by the national office, but the Ontario office has posted a copyright questionnaire on its web site.



Richard Kerr, *collage d'hollywood*, 2003, film still. Courtesy: the artist.

Meanwhile, the Quebec affiliate — Le Regroupement des Artistes en Arts Visuel du Quebec (RAAV) — goes on to distribute a couple of position papers of their own. Unfortunately, these cannot be described as conciliatory. Remember the Christian Right's derogatory invective against "homosexualists?" Well now RAAV, with considerable sniffing, brings us the "appropriationists" — quotes in original! Perhaps these writings are a tactic to make the national office look graceful by comparison.

Getting back to our transgressive time machine, Arthur Lipsett provides a fine example of the politics of ownership. As an NFB employee, Lipsett's boss did in fact own the copyright to the many found sounds and images that he interpolated. But because he chose despairing social satire over nation-building, the NFB sacked him anyway. "The world can't be that miserable," as his assigned producer put it.[2] Without this protective institutional shell — such as it was — he had no means to make and show his work.

I don't believe Arthur Lipsett was a more ethical artist when he was employed than when he was unemployed; I don't believe his removal from productivity did anything for anyone's "moral rights;" and I don't believe that the poverty of other filmmakers is Arthur Lipsett's fault. If CARFAC happens to agree with me, then they have not been very articulate, or consistent, about it.

In fact, in the most distressingly offensive paragraph of their initial statement, they assert that "Appropriation without permission" — in other words, appropriation as it has been practiced by artists for *centuries* — "tramples on moral rights." Well, what about collage artists' moral rights? Wasn't CARFAC supposed to be representing our interests too? But hang on, because here comes the punchline:

"Furthermore, if artists are not paid for what they create, why would anyone make art?"

I have a better question: what path of putative logic led our community's most powerful advocates into such a dead end as this? With one phrase they render invisible the untold millions of artists living and dead — a vast majority — who were *not* paid for what they created, but did it anyway, often under extreme economic, legal and political duress. Then they place blame for this situation at the doorstep of *other artists* who dare to appropriate without sanction. And this after calling Appropriation Art "alarmist!"

Does the "art market" with its preposterous system of values really represent something Canadian artists want to perpetuate, even having secured a bigger slice?

Surely someone at CARFAC must understand that the primary economic imperative for the vast majority of unsponsored artists is not to enhance profits but merely to *reduce outflows*. And collage artists do get it coming and going, because the confusion that has been sown around this issue creates a real and present chill.

I speak from experience: I found one film festival attempting to relegate my work to a free-screening ghetto with pro-copyright panelist to follow. No thanks. Let's not even talk about broadcasting, because there's nothing to talk about — no permissions, no license. Even a supportive programmer friend expressed to me that appropriation is OK as long as you don't *make money* on it, which should throw the market-fundamentalists into a dizzy spell. I have had occasion to desire money for sure, but I haven't spent the last 15 years making calling cards; I do not aspire to the rank of professional gentleman from the "appropriationist" gutter.

While attending the Victoria Anarchist Bookfair this summer, I met some folks from Coletivo Êxito de Rua, a youth-media group in poverty-rich Recife, Brazil whose agenda is "resistance and solidarity." After showing a couple of videos on local hip-hop and graffiti culture, they made an appeal for video equipment, which would allow the kids to make their own movies. They talked about how even the poorest family owns a DVD player and watches it five hours a day. I asked what happened to the VCRS that must have come before; they are all gathering dust in the corner, was the reply. And so I described to them how my friend Matias Rozenberg made a collage video using only two VCRS and TV footage of the first Gulf War, and how they could use the same technique to challenge their community's passive consumption of mainstream media. Surprisingly enough, these social activists' immediate response was not concern for the proprietary rights of the networks. Rather they exclaimed, "We've got to turn them loose on the soap operas!"

Coletivo Êxito de Rua, *Lancamento In-Bolada*, 2004. Courtesy: the author.

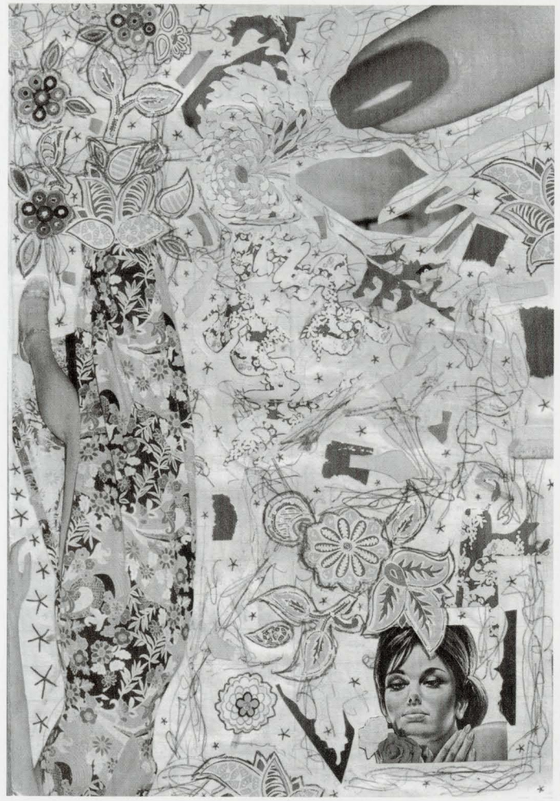
Alas, CARFAC in their majesty would forbid rich and poor alike from editing soap operas between two VCRS. They ominously instruct appropriation artists to "proceed with caution," because "the copyright law [is] designed to benefit them" — note the third person reference, and then ask yourself how CARFAC's position would have benefited *MAD Magazine*, or Tom Stoppard, or the blues!

Intellectual property boosterism flies in the face of solidarity across sectors and nations. I wonder if CARFAC has given a moment of thought to how their policy agenda provides convenient shelter to, for instance, the pharmaceutical industries that seek to limit access to their medicines in the name of private profit? Or to the corporate genetic engineers who brought us agricultural products like terminator seeds — which grow once and then die, only to contaminate surrounding fields and claim them as Monsanto's as well? How about that noted patron of the arts Stephen Harper, who as of this writing is moving forward with plans to enshrine socially catastrophic "property rights" in the Canadian constitution?

Do artists really benefit by riding piggyback on this Brontosaurian agenda? The words of Vandana Shiva seem pertinent: "We have a little prayer at seed sowing which says, "May this seed be exhaustless." The terminator technology comes from another kind of prayer from industry. It says, "May this seed be exhausted, so that our profits are exhaustless."[3]

There are other, significantly different directions that arts advocacy might take us. At that aforementioned Victoria bookfair I scored a bargain on a late 1980s screed by Herbert Schiller, which gave me a dose of highly useful anticapitalist realpolitik. "A new version of 'the free-flow (of information)' doctrine," Schiller writes, "would aim at reducing private monopoly power over news, TV programs, films, music, data processing, publishing and advertising. It would encourage the availability, as much as possible, of information as a social and inexpensive good, not, as increasingly the situation, as a saleable commodity."[4] This program, he hastens to add, would be fanatically opposed by the select beneficiaries of the "free" market of intellectual property. But the benefits really would seem to justify the effort.

Indeed, the failure of CARFAC's policy in this matter could provide a broader-based teachable moment. Does the "art market" with its preposterous system of values really represent something Canadian artists want to perpetuate, even having secured a bigger slice? Would it not make more sense to move toward a leveling of rewards among all artists based on effort and sacrifice, rather than on the basis of units shifted and/or bourgeois prestige? Would this not lead logically to some kind of negotiated, guaranteed income? And would this new economic conception not be applicable and inspirational to other sectors as well?



Marinko Jareb, *brown is exotic & erotic* in *Dirty and Sticky*, 2002, collage. Courtesy: the artist.

Hard-nosed arts organizers might puff up at this rhetoric, label it utopian mystification; but if they cannot embrace the utopia as their own, they could at least stop standing on its neck. I mean, is it any less mystifying to lecture artists to "respect the law" while you yourself work tirelessly to *change* it? This sounds more like population management than "representation" to me.

In (very) short, CARFAC's general emphasis on enforcing *permission* can only be expected to benefit *permitted* artists. However, the consent to be governed can be withdrawn; and this brings me back to the great Stinky Marinky, now setting up his one-man show at Cram Gallery in St. Catharines. I am regaling him and a room of incredulous artists with the details of CARFAC's anti-appropriation crusade, and I say sternly to the Croatian Sensation that these new rules could really screw up his book art.

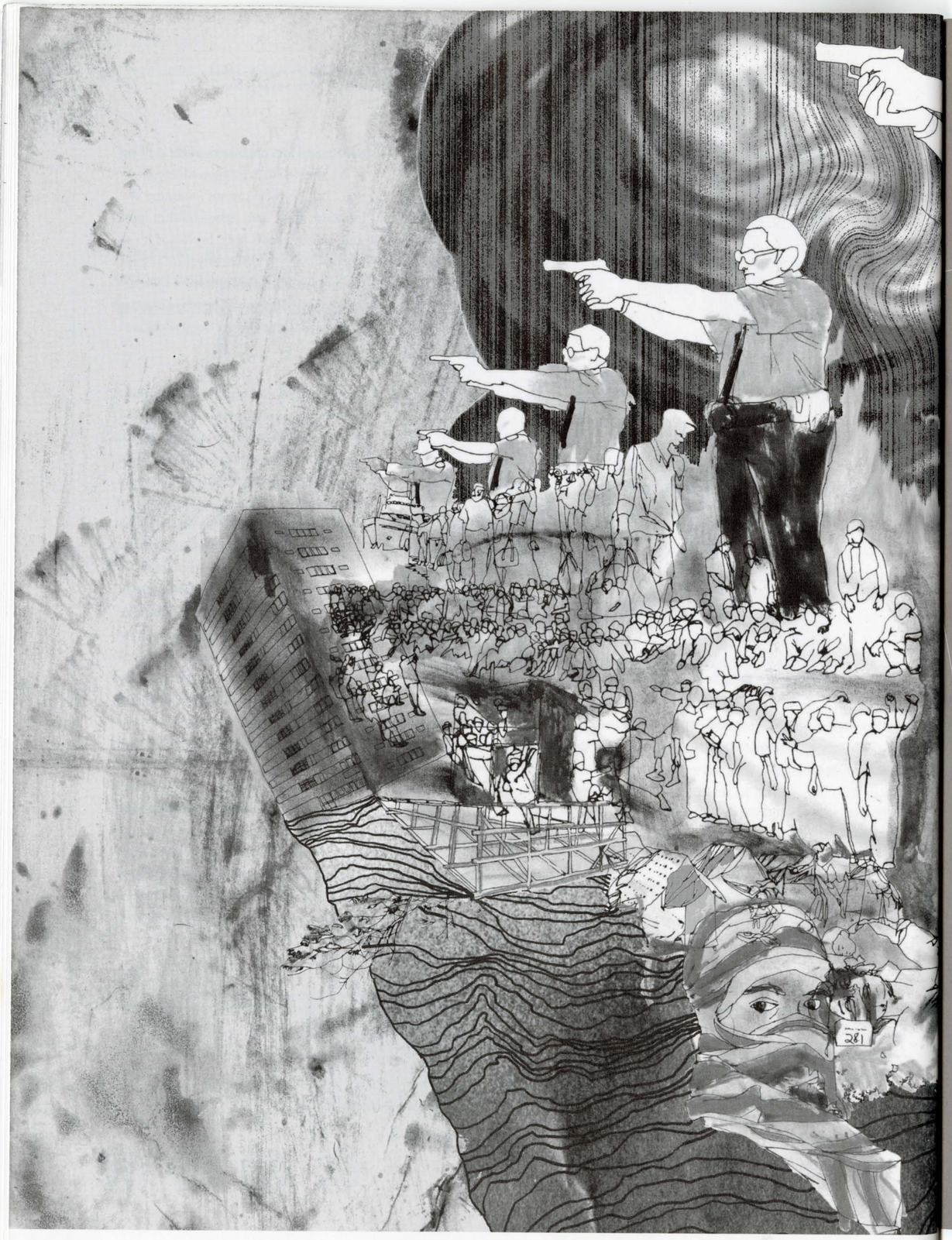
"No it won't, man. I'll just fucking ignore it."

I invite you to consider the implications of this response.

Jonathan Culp co-founded the Toronto Video Activist Collective and the Satan Macnuggit Video Road Show. His most recent video is It Can Happen Here, *a collage documentary. His zine* Cine-VHS, *an international guide to* VHS *collage, is available on request from jonathan@satanmacnuggit.com.*

Notes:

1. "Copyright Law and the Visual Artist," CARFAC. http://www.carfac.ca/2006/11/copyright-law-and-the-visual-artist/.
2. Tom Daly, interview. From Lois Siegel, "A Clown Outside the Circus," http://www.siegelproductions.ca/filmfanatics/arthurlipsett.htm
3. Vandana Shiva, audio clip. http://www.banterminator.org/news_updates/audio_and_video/terminator_on_trial/vandana_shiva_3
4. Herbert I. Schiller, *Culture Inc.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).



Shannon Muegge. *Precarity*, 2007. Courtesy: the artist.

STATEMENTS ON PRECARITY:
A Follow-Up

Introduction by Gita Hashemi

This past February, a newly-formed collective composed of artists, academics and activists organized an event held in conjunction with the launch of FUSE Magazine's "Precarity" issue that featured A. Renzi and S. Turpin's *Nothing Fails Like Prayer: Notes on the Cult of Saint Precario.* Titled "Statements on Precarity," the event kicked off precarity-canada, a loosely articulated resistant networking project. The organizers invited interested individuals as well as representatives from diverse community organizations and political groups to present statements on "how precarity affects their work and lives and how they are fighting back." The statements that follow this introduction were sent to FUSE in writing by some of the presenters. The diversity of the responses to the concept of precarity — at the event, in this text and in the blogosphere — opens a critical space for reflecting on the relationship of creative practice and socio-political activism.

While some respondents embraced precarity as a concept that can open up new/renewed dialogue amongst diverse resistant/oppositional movements, others expressed discomfort with its foreignness. In reference to its post-Marxian analysis as well as its transnational and intellectual aspects, somebody called PRECARITY a form of branding and another argued that it was yet a new European intellectual import into the North American social context. I personally remain keenly aware that naming does not the reality start. Even though more people (increasingly of middle class origins or aspirations) are being pushed into precarious social life by the neoliberal order of things, precarity is nothing new. I have no real memory of the time when my livelihood/income and social status weren't precarious, having for over two decades lived/struggled in North America variously as "illegal alien," "foreign student," "refugee," 'immigrant," "artist," "cultural worker," "freelancer," "contract faculty." Add female and/or Iranian to any of these and see the precarity thicken. Yet I also believe in the instrumental and catalytic roles that concepts and articulations can play in resistant social discourse. Thus, precarity's usefulness as a concept should only be measured against the forms of alliance and articulations, actions and demands it can facilitate and enable.

As a concept, precarity has the potential to create broader networks and alliances and a shared conceptual space to envision and deploy specific broad-base campaigns. I am not convinced, however, that the flexibility of the concept is in and of itself sufficient for shifting the dynamics of social activism in North America (or elsewhere) to overcome current fragmentations and catalyze significant social transformation. I want to remind us that, as an umbrella category like any other (e.g. proletariat, middle-class, working class, etc), there is the danger that "precariate" would over-generalize and erase social and historical differences (including gender, race, sexuality, etc). Thus, in addition to facilitating new/expanded/alternative forms of organizing and bridging, the challenge facing the artists, academics and activists who've taken up PRECARITY is to do so in critically inclusive ways that remain accountable to the diverse communities and struggles they draw upon.

Disparity Leads to Precarity

Victor Willis
Parkdale Activity-Recreation Centre (PARC)

Last week I spent Monday evening sitting in the Parkdale Library basement with about 150 people and four other panelists who, like me, were asked to provide their thoughts and opinions about the possibility of managing gentrification in Parkdale. The discussion was interesting and the audience blessedly progressive and yet it was some time into the discussion before the issue of class and the impact that gentrification has on poor people was raised. After the panel, I spoke with someone who mentioned the idea of Precarity.

The following day I spent a few minutes with the Action Group members of the Parkdale Activity-Recreation Centre. I mentioned the idea of Precarity to the 12 adults who meet every Tuesday at PARC. The Action Group members are people who know Precarity not as a movement that has focused on youth and workers in dead-end, low paying jobs with little or no control of their labour. The Action Group members are adults who have experienced firsthand the realities of being forced to live precariously; to live in depressingly small rooms, survive on inadequate meals, endure treatment that has been known to cause side effects that can be worse than the symptoms the treatment is supposed to cure. To live in precariously poor housing, on precariously little money with precariously few choices and a precariously discriminatory set of policies that govern how little one may be allowed to live on.

One quipped that "Disparity leads to Precarity"

What an elegantly simple way of describing the nature of these issues. The disparities that allow some people to have more, more control, more choices, more housing, more food and longer life; like a simple teeter-totter, create the precariousness of others lives.

Precarity Speaker's Corner, 2007. Photo: Roberta Buiani.

Alternatives to Homogenizing Imperatives

Scott Thomson

Improvising musicians, as a group of cultural workers, are a very difficult bunch to describe coherently or succinctly. As musicians who, in general, work to challenge status quo assumptions about musical materials, forms and methods, they find amazingly diverse, creative solutions to the musical problems that such an interrogative process unveils. A rare unifying trait of this constituency is that virtually no improvising musician makes his or her living solely as a performer, despite the graduate-level education or comparable practical experience that a majority of players possess. A debate about the social value of commercially unviable (some would say "unpopular") music may be lurking here but let me go out on a sturdy limb to suggest that improvisers hear an alternative to the homogenizing imperatives of capitalism. They maintain a steadfast belief that music exists for reasons other than making money.

To suggest that 'improviser' is a precarious vocation is a understatement. Nevertheless, there is a thriving scene here in Toronto that is being increasingly recognized internationally; musicians are doing much work to create performance opportunities for local groups and for collaborations with visiting artists. Of necessity, musicians do other work in order to support these endeavours. Many of them, having performance-based educations, translate these skills as instrumental teachers, while others opt for (or are forced into) non-music-related day jobs. It's significant here that the demands of developing the semblance of a career as an improvising musician — independent practice, rehearsal, performance, touring, and, crucially, the organization of DIY gigs and series — make time demands that often make the supplementary work precarious. This is a particularly acute problem in situations where employers are unsympathetic and unwilling to allow for the flexibility of schedule that music-related work demands. As such, improvising musicians are doubly precarious workers despite their educations or reputations as performers. This is a condition, I'm sure, which is shared by art practitioners from other fields whose work remains vital despite being commercially marginal.

Affecting Individuals and Institutions

Kristian Clarke
Canadian Artists Representation/le front des artistes Ontario (CARFAC)

The issue of precarity is particularly pertinent here in Ontario, as artists of all disciplines have been banding together through their associations to address the precarious socio-economic conditions of their collective existence. This intiative has been motivated by the Ministry of Culture's promise to formally research the needs of cultural workers, with the intention of improving their unstable lives. Very recently (2006 December), the government released a document titled a *Report on the Socio-Economic Status of the Artist in Ontario in the 21st Century* that outlined different recommendations for alleviating precarity. They ranged in scope from increasing funding to the Ontario Arts Council, allowing freelance artists to receive Employment Insurance benefits similar to those afforded to regular employees (e.g. Parental Leave) and averaging an artist's income over several years for tax purposes, to extending subsidies to landlords that provide affordable live/work spaces to artists. These are just a few of the recommendations.
(See http://www.macac.on.ca/src/en/index.aspx)

What struck a chord with me when I learned more about the Precarity movement was this idea that the privileges of enjoying material security come with a huge sacrifice — your time, life, energy, integrity, creativity and autonomy — which in itself is a sign of precarity. Artists are intelligent and resourceful people who take on jobs as arts administrators, teachers, or enter unrelated vocations in order to support themselves. In some cases, their art careers get put on hold, or their personal lives suffer in order to accommodate the time to create.

One final observation is the institutional precarity that is epidemic in Ontario. Many arts organizations like CARFAC Ontario have annual operational funding that very rarely increases to accommodate the growth of organizations or increases in cost of living. This funding has in some years actually been clawed back. The band-aid solution is for organizations to apply for special project funding (e.g. Trillium Foundation) to not only pay for the costs of the project but also assist with operational increases (e.g. rent, salaries, supplies). Alleviating organizational precarity will provide a stronger voice for individuals living under precarious conditions.

Some thoughts on precarity

R.Labossierre

We do not have enough wile to be more than cartoon coyotes. We are not like the birds in the sky, the animals in the forest or the fish in the sea. We do not live solely "by our wits," foraging each day to survive, improvising shelters out of sticks, raising families only to release them into "the wild."

We are neither predators nor prey. We are cultivators and collaborators. Working together, we are capable of creating great abundance. And as cultivators and collaborators, we are entitled to the security that abundance affords.

To paraphrase and somewhat modify something Lester Pearson once said,

> "In facing the choice of peace or extinction, man must renounce predatory [behaviour] and look to the primacy of world concerns to bring about peace and security for all."

12 Steps:

1. We admitted we were powerless over precarity — that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves was responsible and could restore us to security.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of a guiding spirit, for example, St. Precario.
4. Made a searching and fearless inventory of our precarity.
5. Shared with another human being the exact nature of our precarity. (e.g. poverty, depression, isolation, loneliness).
6. Prepared ourselves to live with security, and began to remove all the things that keep us precarious.
7. Humbly asked for help from others to remove our precarity.
8. Made a list of all persons we know to be living precariously, and became willing to share with them our precarity to help them with theirs, if they so desired.
9. Directly shared our precarity with such people wherever possible, except when to do so would increase their precarity or that of others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory of our precarity and when we experienced it again or in different forms, took immediate steps to address it.
11. Sought to improve our consciousness of precarity, our knowledge of how it comes to be and how it is conserved and spread, and solutions to it.
12. Having succeeded in reducing our precarity as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to others, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Precarity-Canada
Precarity is for people, people for Precarity

Precarity-Canada
inequality leads to precarity

Precarity-Canada
precarity means no security and no equity

Precarity-Canada
we are all in trouble

Precarity-Canada
disparity leads to precarity

Precarity-Canada
where is my ice flow?

Precarity-Canada
here today, gone tomorrow

Precarity-Canada
work buy die

Precarity-Canada
The sky is falling_____ May Day!

Precarity-Canada
the involuntary simplicity movement

Precarity-Canada
stopping them from making us earn less

Precarity-Canada
permanent, full-time work with benefits and pension for all

Precarity-Canada
you can put a price on self-respect

Precarity-Canada
we're not going to take it any more

Precarity-Canada
working for a cure to the poverty pandemic

Precarity-Canada
more to contribute than just raw labour

Slogans created on the Sloganeer workstation by participants at a meeting of Precarity-Canada, held at the Smiling Buddha in Toronto, February 1, 2007.
Sloganeer is a a project of R.Labossiere.

Precarity and Indigenous Peoples on Turtle Island

Zainab Amadahy

Though "precarity" is currently a term that belongs to a particular subculture, it is immediately evident that the concept clearly applies to indigenous peoples on Turtle Island.

Unemployment rates in First Nations communities range from 50 percent to 80 percent. Homelessness is epidemic among "urban Aboriginals." Housing shortages and substandard housing are among the issues First Nations people deal with on a daily basis. Aboriginal communities are consistently among the poorest in Canada as reported by various studies including Statistics Canada. This poverty impacts our health, education and every aspect of our well-being.

But it occurs to me that knowing this doesn't shed a lot of light on the underlying causes of precarity. Nor does it speak to the vision of an alternative.

First Nations people are the original inhabitants/caretakers of the land we refer to as Turtle Island, which includes all of North America. Our languages, cultures and very identity are intimately connected to and rooted in this land. To separate us from the land either conceptually or physically is an act of genocide. And that is exactly what the colonizers have done.

The standard of living settlers enjoy in North America (some of us more than others) is founded on genocide, stolen land, stolen resources and stolen African and indigenous people who were enslaved (stolen labour). These original thefts were committed in the past but their legacy impacts us all in the present.

In spite of this, First Nations communities across Turtle Island continue to struggle with great courage for their very survival as well as the survival of future generations. While most media like to focus on dramatic events like the Oka Crisis, the murder of activist Dudley George at Ipperwash Provincial Park or the current Six Nations land reclamation (all important struggles), anti-genocidal activities are practiced in all communities and include things as basic as cultural and language programs.

But central to our recovery is the land. Our communities need our lands returned to us. Then we can take care of our own well-being and not have to depend on the colonizer for jobs, housing or education.

More than that, if we listen to the wise people of indigenous nations the world over, we hear of the need for a paradigm shift crucial to the survival of all two-leggeds that walk Mother Earth. A shift that recognizes our relationship to the land on which we depend for life; recognizes our roles and responsibilities to each other in a community that includes other species besides human beings as well as those yet to be born. The wise ones speak of spiritual development, dignity and peace. In their wisdom we find a system of values that challenges the political, economic and social institutions of Canada. In the wisdom of indigenous peoples we find encouragement to share, trade, learn, grow and create something new and wondrous.

The opposite of genocide isn't survival; it's creation.

Organizing Against Precarity

Workers' Action Centre

The temp industry is adding to the growing tier of second-class workers in this country. And this is on no small scale: over the past six years this industry grew from a $1.6 billion industry to $4.4 billion. An enormous profit is being made and it is certainly not finding its way into the hands of temp workers themselves. Despite this significant growth, temporary workers regularly pay the price in job loss and poverty.

On average, temp workers make 40 percent less than their permanent counterparts without health benefits or sick days. And the precarious nature of their work, short-term assignments, and working between two "employers" makes temp workers even more vulnerable in this unregulated industry. The cost of doing business is being downloaded onto workers in every way imaginable.

Employers have been creative at finding ways to drive down wages and erode working conditions. And the government has been complicit in its own way. Almost 25 percent of workers are paid wages of $10 or less. Less than 1 percent of workers are of bad bosses ever get inspected, and $59 million of our wages have not been collected by the Ministry in the last three years.

So, what are we doing about it? Workers across this province are calling on the provincial government to give Ontario Workers a Fair Deal! It's urgent the Liberal Government ensure all workers in Ontario have decent wages and protection on the job.

Members of the Workers' Action Centre are calling on the Provincial Government to:

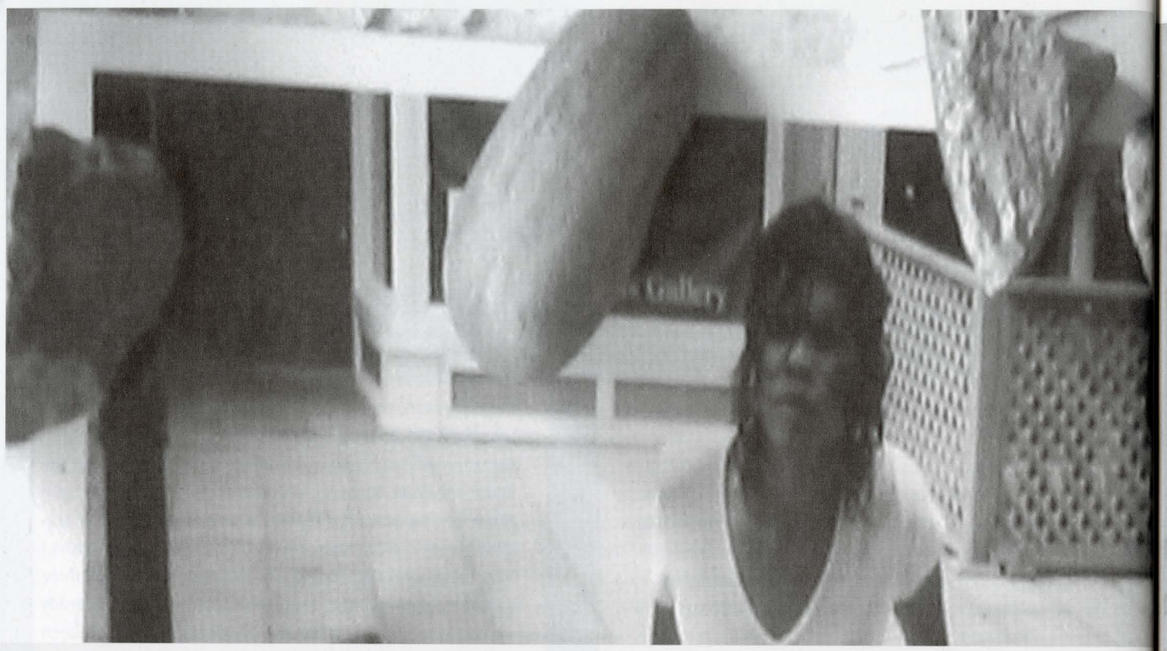
- Increase the Minimum Wage to $10 an hour and index it to inflation.
- Expand labour laws to protect temporary and contract workers.
- Commit resources to hire 100 standards officers for more effective enforcement.

These policies can be changed. That is why the Workers' Action Centre is organizing for a Fair Deal for Ontario Workers. We are a worker-based organization. We are recent immigrants, workers of colour, women and youth in precarious jobs. We, along with community groups across the province, will be pressing the provincial government to put workers' rights on the political agenda.

The Flipside of Liquidity is Precarity

Bob Hanke

To riff on Zygmunt Bauman's *Liquid Life*, after obtaining my Ph.D. and working in tenuous-track academic positions for the past 20 years, I find myself struggling to prevent my assets from being turned into liabilities, my abilities into disabilities, in the liquid university. My personal labour troubles can be read as a prism into the growing disparity between the two tiers of academic labour in Canadian universities. For the last six years I have taught at York University on short-term contracts in three different programs. At the same time, I have produced a steady stream of published scholarship in media studies and been awarded a highly-competitive, peer-reviewed SSHRC grant for my program of research. This grant means that I am bringing funds to York University to hire and train graduate students. In light of my academic success, and the length and intensity of my service, this year I applied to an Affirmative Action program designed "in recognition of the substantial contribution to the University community made by long-term employees, and of the obstacles that faced these employees in their attempts to find academic employment." However, despite my demonstration of flexibility to the university, what I encountered in my bid for conversion from tenuous to tenure-track was the assertion of the inflexible managerial rights over the interpretation of one contractual stipulation. Thus, in spite of a CUPE 3903 executive motion that I be included in the pool of people who can apply to this program, Academic Employee Relations has persisted in excluding me by maintaining that I am .5 courses short of the threshold of 12 courses over 4 years. Despite my union representative's best effort to show my employer that it is possible to add my experience up to the required 12 courses, AER have remained obstinate that their way of (dis)counting my work history is the only way. In their arithmetic, a required Ph.D. course I taught in 2002 doesn't count, so a minor fluctuation in my teaching load due to program needs has become, four years on, an obstacle to obtaining long-term, academic employment at York. This is Academic Employee Relations of the worst kind, since it ignores the spirit of the Affirmative Action provisions and belies York's claim to be an Affirmative Action employer. The flipside of liquidity is precarity.



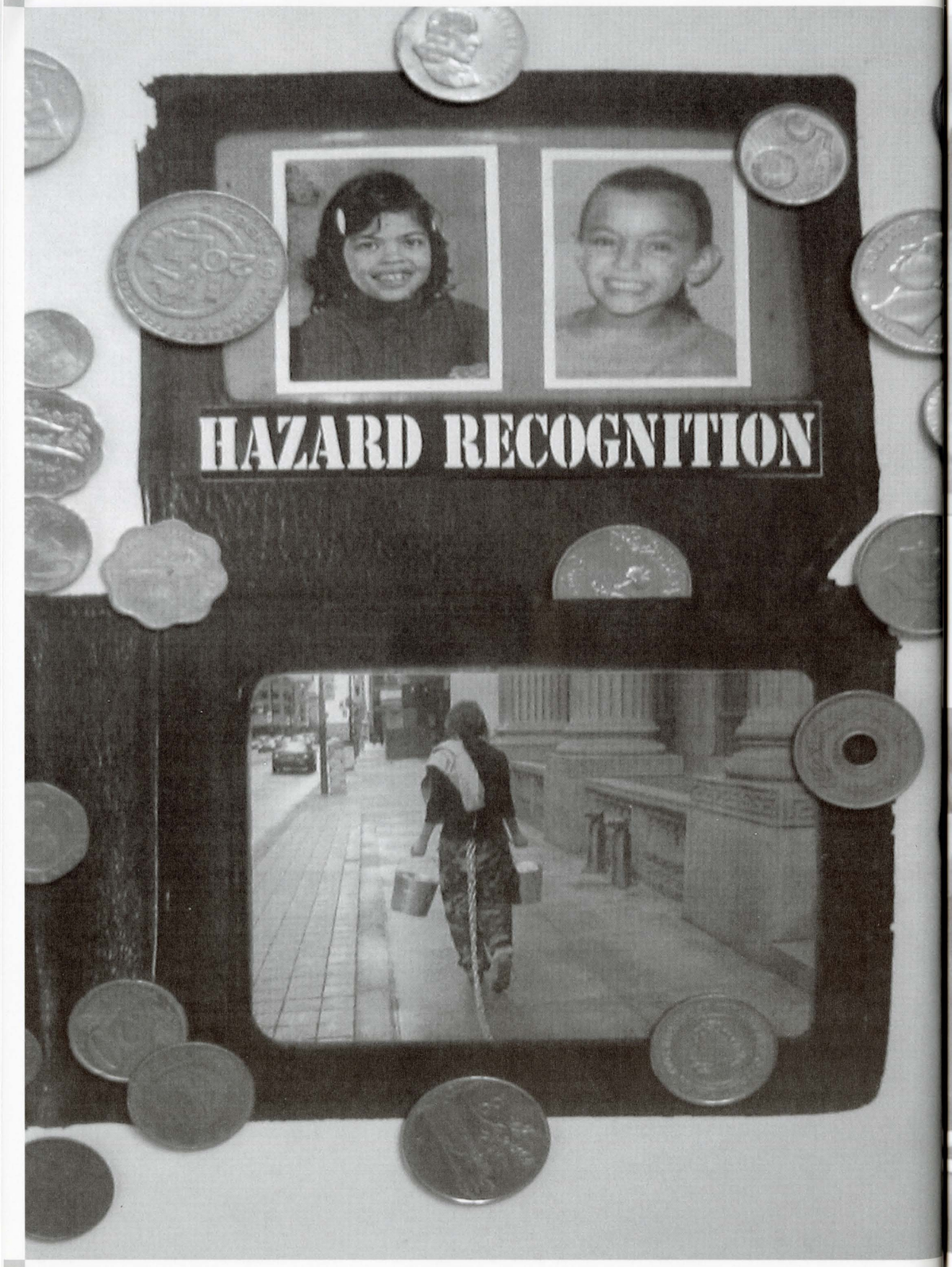
...CONSIDERS PHYSICAL AND MENTAL WORK
DISCRIMINTATION AGAINST PEOPLE ON THE BASIS
OF RACE AND CLASS AS WELL AS STAYING POWER
THE POWER OF ENDURANCE

APPLICATION FOR A WORK PERMIT MADE OUTSIDE OF CANADA
DEMANDE D'UN PERMIS DE TRAVAIL PRÉSENTÉE À L'EXTÉRIEUR DU CANADA

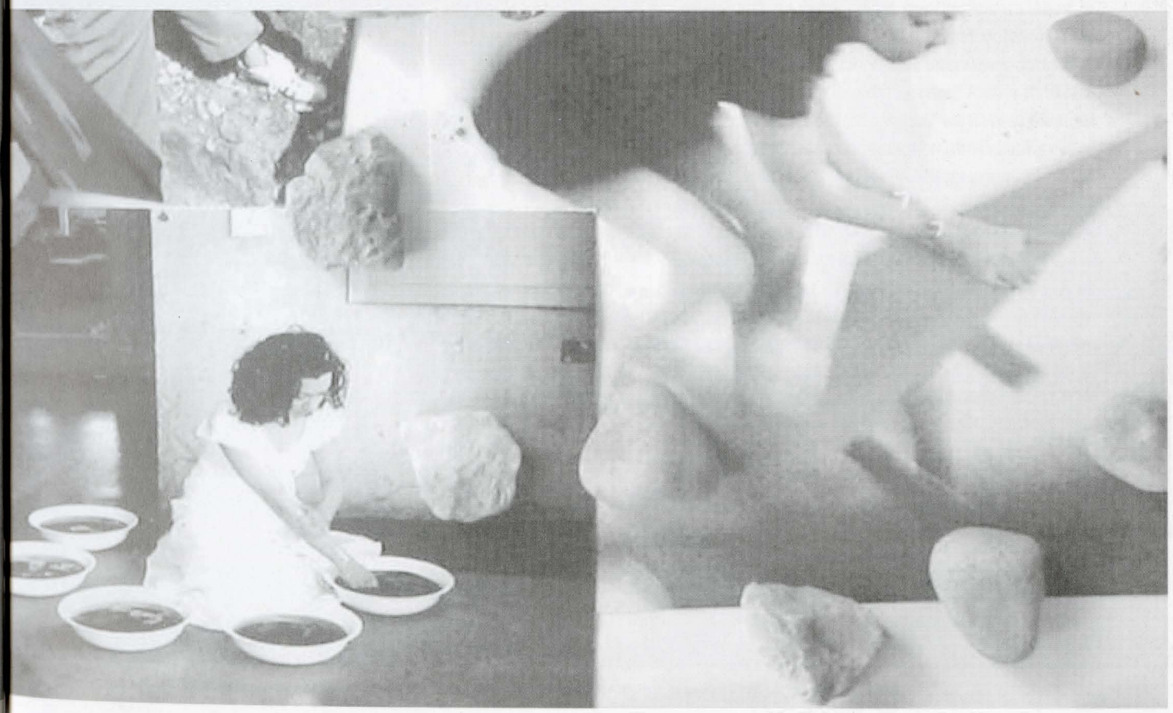
STAMINA
LABOUR
APARTHEID

022 494225K

IDENTITY CARD

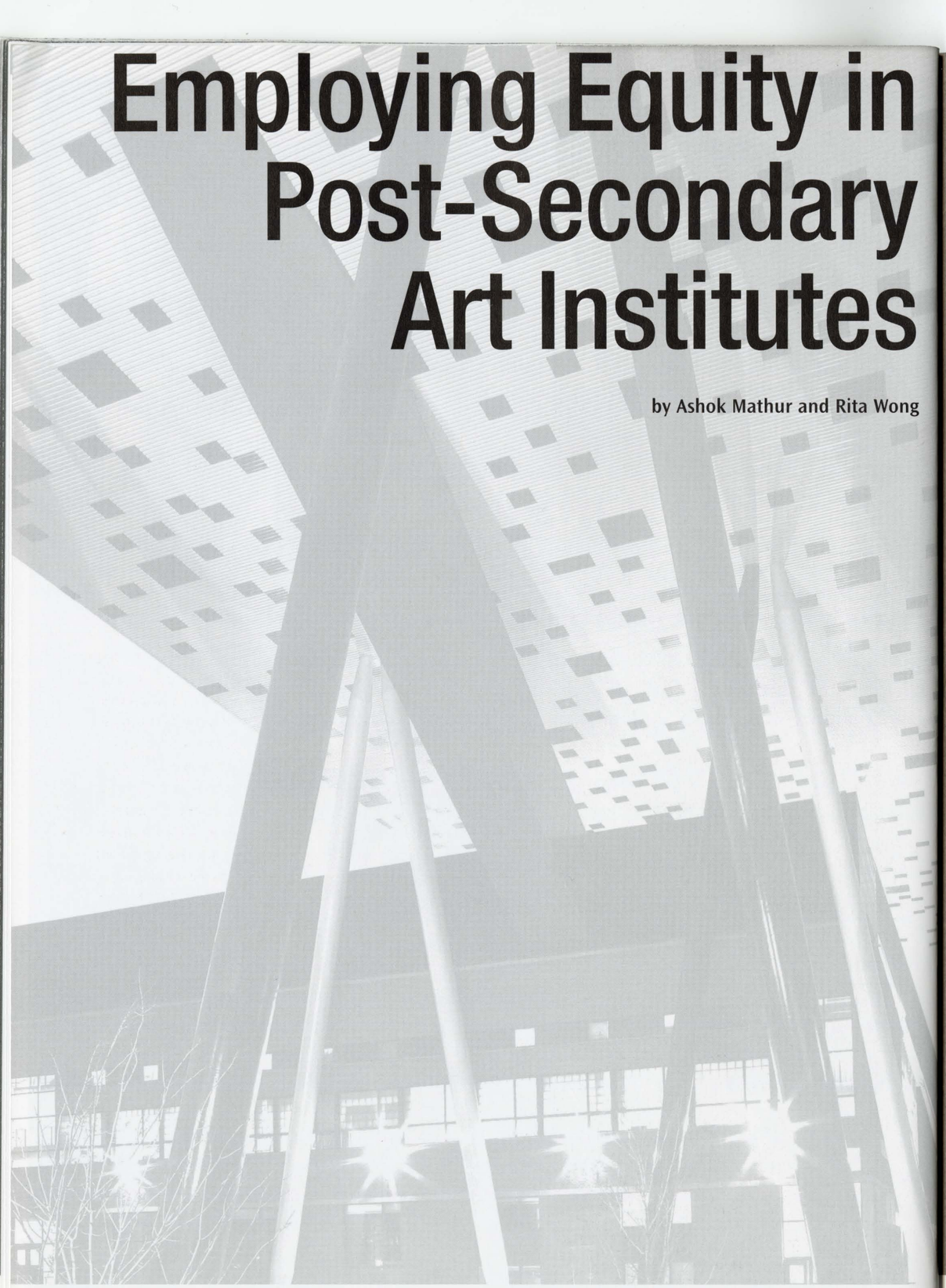


IT IS ESSENTIAL FOR LOCAL AND GLOBAL COMMUNITIES TO PROVIDE THE RESOURCES AND SUPPORT NECESSARY TO LIVE A LIFE FREE FROM DISCRIMINATION



Employing Equity in Post-Secondary Art Institutes

by Ashok Mathur and Rita Wong



OCAD Sharp Centre for Design, 2006. Photo: Richard Johnson, interiorimages.ca. Courtesy: OCAD.

The following article is based on the findings of a research team (professors, artist-researchers, undergraduate and graduate research assistants) investigating, in part, equity issues at post-secondary schools of art and design in English-speaking Canada. Through a joint initiative between the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and the Department of Canadian Heritage, members of the team (Ashok Mathur, Aruna Srivastava, Rita Wong) interviewed students, graduates, faculty and administrators from five schools — the Emily Carr Institute, the Alberta College of Art and Design, the Banff Centre, the Ontario College of Art and Design, and the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design University — to determine both the effect of previous, and the potential of current equity work to address changing demographics and social conditions in arts training in this country. Two of the researchers produced this collaborative narrative, attempting to coalesce the disparate ideas of the team into an article. The "I" inhabiting this exploration, then, is a collective first-person pronoun, with no attempt to distinguish the various experiences, although it may be evident that most of these positions are drawn directly from one of the two writers.

Each of Canada's post-secondary art institutions has made some efforts, ranging from feeble to vigorous, to address employment equity, the officially designated groups being women, aboriginal people, visible minorities and people with disabilities. However, none of these institutions, as our research ultimately showed us, has done nearly enough, to take an anti-racist pedagogy and practice into the fibre and fabric of its spaces. From hours of transcribed interviews, I see a picture emerging, one of hope but one somewhat tainted by what Pierre Bourdieu would call the position of the oblate — that low-level priestly order that is invested in keeping things as they are because that's the way they have always been.[1] I would not begin to suggest that such was an overarching tone; indeed, most people we talked to voiced a need for progressive change. But to what order, in what manner and speed, that is the question. As one interviewee phrased it, "We're not doing 'terribly' but we could do better." Rather than languish in the half-hearted realm of "not terrible," we have suggestions as to how "better" can happen immediately. With the collating eye of research assistant Kathryn Sloan, we developed a number of action points, originally delivered to a diversity session at an OCAD symposium in early 2006. These points are critical to embrace in order to foment real and immediate, rather than cosmetic and glacial, change. These points are interspersed in the article, explicated as best as we can, and while we acknowledge that there will be resistance to such implementation, we also feel that without a radical movement, the current post-secondary art and design scene will remain mired in both an unrecuperable past and a technically driven future.

If multiculturalism is not to circulate people of colour around an undeclared but still dominant white centre, it needs to be reoriented in terms of how it speaks to historical and contemporary power relations, particularly around issues of indigineity.

A critique of multiculturalism can begin with the question of how to align and organize towards the goal of decolonization. If multiculturalism is not to circulate people of colour around an undeclared but still dominant white centre, it needs to be reoriented in terms of how it speaks to historical and contemporary power relations, particularly around issues of indigeneity. This ongoing need to build alliances was brought home to me during a panel at the Emily Carr Institute of Art + Design called "Define Indian," which explored connections between "Indians," as in First Nations artists, and "Indians," as in South Asian artists.[2] At one point, one of the coordinators, Lori Blondeau, explicitly stated that educational institutions are colonial spaces, which have historically been used to colonize indigenous peoples — through residential schools, for instance. She was questioned by someone in the audience: "Did I hear you right? Did you say that educational institutions might be colonial instruments?" Her assertion that no, there was no "might be," that such institutions *were* unquestionably colonial instruments, raised laughter and appreciation from quite a few people in the audience, which consisted of members of the general public as well as Emily Carr students. This moment stands out for me — where a voice of resistance speaks back to the institution, contributing to the process of shifting the oppressive patterns that mark colonization.

Ashok Mathur, Nadia Kurd, Zainab Amadahy, Dana Claxton, Adrian Stimson and Pravin Pillay at a *Define Indian* Panel Session, 2006. Photo: Riaz Mehmood. Courtesy: SAVAC.

That exchange also reminded me of my responsibility to name and examine the mechanisms of colonization, so that this burden work does not rest only on First Nations people's shoulders. As one of the panelists, Dana Claxton, pointed out, all of us who come to this continent, regardless of race or relationship to different colonialisms, are implicated in the imperialist subjugation of indigenous peoples. Implication does not have to be a negative, stagnant place; it can be the springboard for action and consciousness. Claxton, who saw the connection between red Indians and brown Indians (the very term a problem in the context of geography and nationalism) to include a common, long-term battle against the British empire, emphasized the importance of knowing the histories of the land on which we live and recognizing the differences, including levels of class oppression, that continue to make it difficult to organize together. Claxton expressed dismay at how, when she started teaching, students were ignorant of basic history such as the outlawing of Native customs like the potlatch (1884 – 1951), and the sexual sterilization acts under which thousands of Native people were sterilized from the 1920s to the 1980s.

It is ongoing, difficult and necessary work to point out how such histories (de)form the norms of what gets taken for granted. While I am grateful that voices like Claxton's and Blondeau's have at times resonated loudly in the classrooms of Emily Carr, on unceded Coast Salish land, I am all too painfully aware that Carr, like other art schools across Canada, does not have permanent First Nations professors to teach these critical histories and practices.[3] The problem, we know all too well, is systemic; it has to do not only with inadequate gains through employment equity, but Eurocentric curriculum, questions of student support, inadequate funding, labour conditions, the need to strengthen connections to communities that are underserved by art schools, and much more.

Define Indian Panel, 2006. Photo: Riaz Mehmood. Courtesy: SAVAC.

To this end, two of the key recommendations coming from this research are around course content and delivery:

> 1. Curriculum audit to determine where and how to offer more inquiry and research-based courses that allow students to match material and content to a more culturally valid approach. Key in on research as necessary to such a project of diversity.
>
> 2. Add courses and course materials that are specifically geared toward more diverse approaches to representation. This means remodeling how art history is taught as an exclusive or mostly European domain.

Graduating and senior students at the institutions expressed a strong need for a diversified curriculum, as did administrators and faculty. The tricky part is how to include without overloading, how to add without the perception of losing something in the process. This is not dissimilar to curriculum development in university liberal arts programs in the 1960s and 1970s where the hue and cry was how the inclusion of new courses and programs (women's, queer, ethnic studies) would detract from a "classical" education. But the counterpoint is and was that in order to keep up with contemporary issues, curricula must constantly evolve, and this cannot happen by insisting that students take on more. Instead, they must be able to determine the course of their own education.

When tackling the problem of how to address and remedy historical injustices and exclusions, it is important to have an anchor as one negotiates the demands and pressures of institutions. Cornel West notes that if there is no:

> social movement or political pressure from outside these institutions (extra-parliamentary and extra-curricular actions like the social movements of the recent past), transformation degenerates into mere accommodation or sheer stagnation, and the role of the "co-opted progressive" — no matter how fervent one's subversive rhetoric — is rendered more difficult.[4]

As an activist who has worked both in and out of institutions, I recognize that institutions need the interventions and contributions of artists from diverse communities if they are to succeed at their public mission of providing an education that meets the needs of students and society. The questions that then arise include: what would constitute meaningful institutional recognition of historically excluded or marginalized artists? How does one translate theories of democracy into institutional practices? If decolonizing public education is a value we hold dear, how do we implement it? Returning to Chris Creighton-Kelly's essay, "Bleeding the Memory Membrane: Arts Activism and Cultural Institutions," I am reminded that "we ought to get over our Canadian 'niceness' and bring more of the details and everyday oral accounts of institutional functioning under the microscope." In mentioning "Define Indian," I want to clarify that such a directly anti-colonial moment is still relatively rare, and that Sharon Fernandez' statements in 2002 continue to be relevant and accurate:

> If the arts and humanities are marginal, and public space shrinking like the water table, the space for critical debates by artists of colour is even more invisible. How do you nurture the next generation of artists, when critical discourse is inadequate and connections to politically active mentors are tenuous? How

If the arts and humanities are marginal, and public space is shrinking like the water table, the space for critical debates by artists of colour is even more invisible.

Top: Student Show at The Marion Nicholl Gallery, Alberta College of Art + Design, 2006. Courtesy: ACAD.
Center/Below: Emily Carr Institute of Art + Design, 2007. Courtesy: ECIAD.

does one do this in institutions of learning such as art schools and universities when the diversity of cultural practices and histories of anti-racist struggle within the Canadian cultural scene are absent from most curricula? The renewal of vision that comes from grounding in quotidian communal realities is disappearing as the significance of the local that nurtures community is being reconfigured. What we need are new forms of localism that are imbued with the subversive potential of multiple points of origin amidst the common intersections we all experience.[5]

In the context of art schools, a possible way to cultivate such multiply origined and dynamic localism could be to strengthen community-based education (see Melanie Fernandez' article on community art practices).[6] This leads to two more recommendations that seek to address the insularity of institutions:

3. Serious resource-allocation for outreach to racialized artistic communities outside the institution.

4. Exchange programs for students and faculty.

The difficulty here is that institutions are already under pressure to "reach out" but largely within the corporate model of finding external sources of funding, to liaise with business communities and bring in dollars and, in turn, place their students in well-paying jobs. Given these priorities, reaching out to racialized and otherwise marginalized communities seems to reap minor benefits, other than, of course, to do what post-secondary institutions should have as their primary focus, to create environments that foster progressive and critical thinking and practices. In terms of exchange programs, again, many do exist, but largely within Eurocentric networks. Fostering possibilities in and around indigenous and racialized communities globally needs more attention. Indeed, only recently (and led by its equity office) did the Canada Council institute artistic residency programs outside the London/Berlin/New York/Paris model. Much work is still to be done (Port of Spain in Trinidad the only non-European locale thus far) but it represents a step in the right direction, one that art and design schools can learn from.

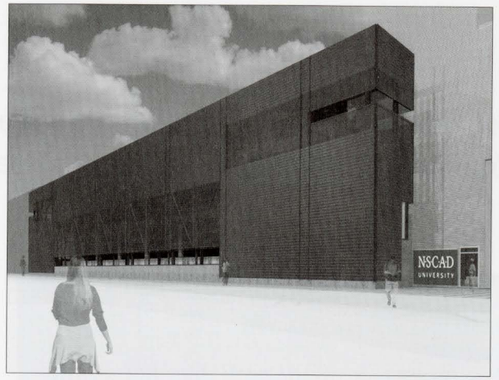
Indeed, there has been some enthusiastic discussion and research into strengthening community-based education at schools like Emily Carr and OCAD. Courses such as ECI's Interdisciplinary Forums (which provided a temporary platform for Tribe and SAVAC) are one example of efforts to bring community practitioners into the halls of art schools. However, much more is possible and necessary. One major challenge will be to ensure that outreach to First Nations communities and communities of colour is an integral component of courses and programs being contemplated. Rather than replicating historical, colonial marginalizations, the education system offers a potential space of transformation. What is at stake, more mundanely, is the school's climate, the ongoing need to translate good intentions, of which there are an abundance, into daily operations, which are constrained by budgetary and labour pressures. It is crucial that administration and faculty seriously explore differences in cultural practices and values if art schools are to transform to meet and match the diversity they aspire to respect.[7] This is long-term, time-consuming work that requires patience and dedication; it also requires more resource allocation that acknowledges the value of what community partnerships contribute, not easy given the financial pressures on educational institutions.

Administrative leadership is also important; for instance, the Ontario College of Art and Design's Employment & Educational Equity Task Force (EEFT), chaired by Wendy Coburn and Richard Fung, with consultant Sharon Fernandez, reports directly to OCAD's president, Sara Diamond, and its stated mandate includes "climate, curriculum, recruitment, faculty recruitment as well as employment and sexual harassment policy." Equally importantly, the EEFT's work is viewed as a critical component of OCAD's strategic plan in its efforts to "realize [its] integration into Toronto's rich mix of diverse communities."[8] Meanwhile, ACAD is mobilizing its Systemic Change Initiative (SCI), its stated goal to "analyze the behaviors, attitudes, policies and practices throughout the college regarding issues of diversity, with a goal of becoming culturally competent both on an individual and institutional level."[9] While its projected outcomes of "fostering diversity" are amorphous, with no specific language about practical changes in hiring or inclusion, the SCI is at least now part of the consciousness of ACAD and has the potential to foment actual change, given the will of leadership and grassroots alike.

It is messy, fiddling work, like constantly tinkering with a machine that has been designed by nine different people, knowing you will never get it in tune.

Striking the balance between having accountable, transparent and fair procedures and having flexibility to make quick decisions is not easy. At times change moves more slowly than one would like, to the point where one either commits to a process with no guarantees or decides to focus one's energy elsewhere. As Creighton-Kelly puts it:

> Activist engagement in institutions must take into account democratic, participatory processes, even when they are tedious. It



Top: Nova Scotia School of Art and Design, 2007. Courtesy: NSCAD.
Below: OCAD Sharp Centre for Design, 2006. Photo: Richard Johnson, interiorimages.ca. Courtesy: OCAD.

> is messy, fiddling work, like constantly tinkering with a machine that has been designed by nine different people, knowing you will never get it in tune. It is work that has none of the grandeur of totalizing theories, none of the romance of 'revolutionary' action, none of the comfort of institutional embrace. It is hard to imagine someone doing it for their entire career without burning out or eventually dulling their critique.

The hope is that policies — be they around employment equity, affirmative action, curricular diversification, harassment, etc. — are widely implemented into a school's culture, so that the burden of always standing up for "diversity" does not fall solely upon the few, still-struggling-not-to-be-token, faculty of colour while everyone else goes along business-as-usual. As Richard Fung asked in 2002:

> How many people of colour do we have within the boards or senior management of our large cultural institutions? We think it's a victory if there's one! And what this does is produce a burden on those individuals to be representative, to speak on behalf of race or ethnicity.[10]

This brings us to the crux of the matter and the importance of recommendations that directly address racialization and equity issues within the ranks of the art school system.

5. Hire more racially/culturally diverse faculty and administrators.

6. Interdisciplinize hiring criteria to meet this need.

7. Go outside the safety of our institutions for hiring expertise.

8. Implement affirmative action until equity is achieved.

Even if institutions manage to hire a few designated group members, what remains structurally daunting is the need for healthier redistribution of workload.

The question of hiring and retention might seem an obvious one, but how to achieve such ends? More importantly, while there's often a will, or a rhetoric of approval, it only counts if the end results are the hiring of diverse faculty. However, with a focus on a type of radical interdisciplinarity, there is potential for rapid change. While hiring criteria is often drafted (or finalized) in the boardroom and through Human Resources, a faculty/student/administrative movement to shift into the future (or try to keep pace with the present) is critically important. This can and will mean going outside the institution's walls and metaphorical insularity to bring in external consultants for hiring committees — and not headhunting firms which tend to toe a conservative line, but members from racialized and disenfranchised communities who can walk into a hiring situation and assist in the difficult process of institutional change. The recommendation we land on, then, is an official implementation of equity hiring. We call this "affirmative action," a principle that has rarely been deployed in a Canadian setting that tends to favour a more polite, but relatively toothless employment equity plan. That is, instead of casting a wide net and seeing who might apply, the suggestion here is for institutions to recruit actively and aggressively, taking into consideration factors such as the gaps among current faculty, and demographics of student populations as well as those of the city, region, and nation.

NSCAD's employment equity policy provides working definitions to distinguish equal opportunity and affirmative action. It states, "Employment Equity is partly achieved when equal opportunities are provided through the removal of discriminatory barriers to employment and promotion, including the elimination or modification of all practices and systems, not authorized by law, which cannot be shown to be bona fide occupational requirements."[11] However, employment equity by itself does not address historically inherited inequities that come with white supremacy; more is needed: "Employment Equity is further achieved when affirmative action measures are promoted to reverse the historic under-representation on faculty, staff, and administration of women, aboriginal peoples, visible minorities, and the disabled. Affirmative Action measures include the introduction of positive policies and practices and the establishment of internal goals and timetables towards the achievement of employment equity by increasing the recruitment, hiring, training, and promotion of these designated group members." So, the explanation as to why affirmative action is needed has been officially posted; the question that then remains is whether resources are devoted to identifying quantifiable goals and timetables.

Even if institutions manage to hire a few designated group members, what remains structurally daunting is the need for healthier redistribution of workload. I am thinking here of the depressing economics of higher education; basically, there are not enough permanent positions, and a systemic reliance on sessional faculty exploits the fact that there are more people available than jobs. This is endemic to the entire post-secondary sector and art schools are no exception. What I observe is regular faculty with heavy teaching loads who are overworked and don't have enough time for their own creative practice and research during the school year, and sessional faculty who are financially stressed to accept as many courses as possible because they work from contract to contract each semester. There are of course exceptions to this, but it remains a general pattern that I find disturbing and demoralizing.

There needs to be more attention given to how to retain, not just recruit, faculty from underrepresented groups, by addressing work-life balance, for instance. Better policies around sabbaticals and leaves of

Overt or malicious racism is relatively rare in my day-to-day dealings at the school, thankfully, yet neglect, polite indifference, complacency, overwork and inadequate funding all contribute to my sense that we're in an unsatisfactory holding pattern.

absence for personal reasons, as well as more support for faculty development (through exchanges, for instance) could perhaps help reduce this large turnover rate. People work at art institutes because they love the schools, the subjects, the students, the locations, etc, but it is important that faculty not be burnt out. Coming up with solutions to this involves a radical redistribution of workload, paying attention to alternative models of job-sharing, team-teaching, and other labour issues. This could help to make working at art institutions more attractive to First Nations faculty, and artists in general, for that matter. An economic model that redistributes workload and resources more equitably could make art schools healthier and move them one step closer towards the decolonization that is so urgent yet still so far away if schools are to work towards being ethical, creative, healthy places that foster innovation.

The glaring absence or under-representation of permanent First Nations or other racialized faculty in art schools raises questions: is it merely that employment equity policies are glacially slow, or is the colonial structure these institutions have inherited doing the work of normalizing marginalization and exclusion without needing to be explicit about it? For an art school to be truly welcoming, how does it need to change culturally, economically, and politically? "Cultural diversity" cannot be contained to surface notions of race, exemplified and foregrounded by four-colour glossy promotional brochures. In order to be ethically engaged, we need to turn our gaze towards the colonial inheritance that still haunts the halls of the art schools. While I might joke about renaming ECI as the Sophie Frank Institute, Sophie Frank being the Squamish basketmaker whom Emily Carr befriended,[12] decolonizing art schools needs active imagination on both a daily basis and at a structural level. As one (white) faculty member phrased it, "Coming out of the imagination of colonization is like learning how to walk again — so much undoing, and so much unfamiliar territory, and we don't have the training for it. It's about being open to thinking and seeing and perceiving differently than what we're used to."[13] Can art schools be made more welcoming at every level, from student to faculty to board, so that this process of evolving perception can occur? I certainly hope so, because such a welcoming would benefit everyone. In terms of sustainability, our long term survival might well depend on how well we can adapt to the First cultures of this land and understand how privileges have been shoddily built upon losses and gaps. The challenge isn't merely how to get more First Nation faculty (though that seems to be already such a big hurdle) permanently, but how to learn models of organization and processes that make institutional spaces more democratic and participatory in an embodied, daily way, so that the institutions work *for* communities rather than *on* them.

The most difficult, then, but concomitantly important recommendation is that of changing ways of thinking, which would include:

9. Compulsory diversity training for existing faculty and administrators

Various models of this have taken place at several schools, largely through student and faculty initiatives. But for this to happen, it needs support at the highest administrative and the deepest grassroots levels. Indeed, because of the nature of shifting demographics and new hirings and such, there is likely significant support at student and faculty levels at all the schools studied. But until there is a shift in administrative sensibility, most likely taking the form of strategic equity hirings at the top levels, these necessary shifts are unlikely to happen. Initiatives such as OCAD's equity plans and ACAD's Systemic Change Initiative are critical benchmarks, but will they have the tenacity to create actual and significant change within the foreseeable future, or will they, as have so many plans before, collapse in on themselves when push comes to shove?

Overt or malicious racism is relatively rare in my day-to-day dealings at school, thankfully, yet neglect, polite indifference, complacency, overwork and inadequate funding all contribute to my sense that we're in an unsatisfactory holding pattern. More is possible, and not only possible, but necessary, in order to re-energize the halls of the art schools, to sustain and improve their ability to serve many communities, not only the relatively privileged ones that have historically had access to them, despite the fraught and often marginalized position that generally comes with the word "art." Andrea Fatona's warning echoes strongly:

> … there's a certain face to institutions that suggest the work on equity has been done. This closes any kind of discussion on the fact that it's not just something that you do and it's done, but it's a continual process. This discussion must be ongoing. The discussions by people of colour have evolved and now take place in a host of different places and tones. The issues might be framed differently, but the actual fundamentals of representation haven't necessarily changed. One of my fears is that issues of representation are now falling outside of public discourse because of the ways in which they have been co-opted, particularly by institutions. I believe these issues need to be out there in the public sphere. Otherwise, they get sucked into spaces where they are no longer visible or important, and as a result of the "it's been done" attitude certain bodies and voices continue to be left out of the conversations.[14]

Rita Wong's book of poems, monkeypuzzle, *for which she received the Asian Canadian Writers' Workshop Emerging Writer Award, was published by Press Gang in 1998. She is an assistant professor in critical & cultural studies at the Emily Carr Institute of Art + Design in Vancouver. Her second book, entitled* forage, *is forthcoming with Nightwood editions in 2007.*

Ashok Mathur is a novelist, poet, and cultural organizer. He currently directs the Centre for Innovation in Culture and Arts in Canada (CICAC) at Thompson Rivers University (Kamloops, BC) where he holds a Canada Research Chair in Cultural and Artistic Inquiry.

Notes:

1. Pierre Bourdieu. *Homo Academicus.* Trans. Peter Collier. (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1988), p.100.
2. The event was part of a series of events collaboratively organized by two artist-run collectives: Tribe — A Centre for Evolving Aboriginal Media, Visual and Performing Arts, and SAVAC — the South Asian Visual Arts Collective. Both SAVAC and Tribe are artist-run collectives without a permanent space. They deliberately chose to intervene in educational institutions — in Vancouver, Saskatoon, and Toronto — relatively permanent spaces that need to shift from assimilation to transformation.
3. This is slowly changing; as demand increases for First Nations art content in educational institutions, schools (such as Emily Carr) are beginning to address these concerns in their job postings.
4. Quoted in Chris Creighton-Kelly. "Bleeding the Memory Membrane: Arts Activism and Cultural Institutions." *Questions of Community: Artists, Audiences, Coalitions.* Eds. Daina Augaitis et al. (Banff: Walter Phillips Gallery, 1995), p.91-113.
5. Fernandez, Sharon. Interview. *13 Conversations about Art and Cultural Race Politics.* Eds. Richard Fung and Monika Kin Gagnon. (Montréal: Artextes Editions, 2002), p.73-76.
6. "Reflections of a former Community Arts Officer". *FUSE.* 28.3 (Sept, 2005), p.9.
7. Institutional Service Plan 2005 – 2008. Emily Carr Institute home page. Accessed 9 Aug, 2006. http://www.eciad.ca/www/about/Emily_Carr_Service_Plan_2005-2008.pdf
8. President's Interim Report to the OCAD Community, April 2006. Accessed 23 Sept, 2006. http://www.ocad.on.ca/about_ocad/president_office/interim_report.htm
9. Systemic Change Initiative (SCI) at the Alberta College of Art + Design, handout. Distributed to ACAD community Sept 1, 2006.
10. Richard Fung and Monika Kin Gagnon. *13 Conversations about Art and Cultural Race Politics.* Eds. Richard Fung and Monika Kin Gagnon. (Montréal: Artextes Editions, 2002), p. 78.
11. Nova Scotia College of Art and Design Employment Equity Policy. Accessed 19 Sept, 2006. www.nscad.ns.ca/info/employment_equity.pdf.
12. Someone who lived in poverty and lost nine children to the colonizer's diseases, Frank deserves to be remembered as much as Carr for her example.
13. Anonymous. Unpublished interview. April 20, 2006.
14. Andrea Fatona. Interview. 13 *Conversations about Art and Cultural Race Politics.* Eds. Richard Fung and Monika Kin Gagnon. (Montréal: Artextes Editions, 2002), p.36-41.

Transforming Community by Redefining Multiculturalism: *The Fourth Annual Regent Park Film Festival*

8 November – 12 November, 2006
review by Maureen Thompson

Micha X. Peled. *China Blue,* 2005. Courtesy: the filmmaker.

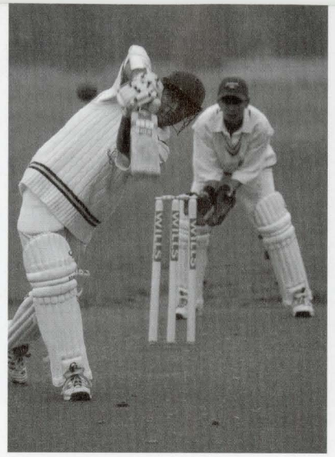
"Take that thing off your head." Sirah is a young Muslim girl somewhere in America, playing Truth or Dare with new friends. In the delicately told short film named for her, Sirah must choose between her connection to family and beliefs and her need for friendship. Like the majority of the films shown during the Festival, *Sirah* is compelling, straightforward and tremendously relevant to the evolving Canadian experience.

With over 80 separate film festivals in Toronto every year, the Regent Park Film Festival is rare in its community focus. Run on a budget that barely pays the festival staff, it depends on the commitment of volunteers for outreach and programming. Founder/Festival Director Chandra Siddan hopes that more Regent Park residents will become involved over time, envisioning an event where people of all different backgrounds are present, breaking down the isolation of a big Canadian city.

This year's festival was the first I attended after leaving the Regent Park community where I had worked for 16 years. When I spoke with Chandra about the impetus for the festival she said that she "was tired and saddened" by the passive Canadian multiculturalism where brown and black people are multicultural by default and where "visible minorities" are, ironically, often invisible in terms of their voice, social and economic positions. Her response to this situation was to create a showcase for the "dynamism of where we live" and the "fluidity of cultures."

The Festival is a visual and storytelling feast of over 30 films, which grew from a student project to a well-attended, five-day event. It takes place in November at the oldest public school in the neighbourhood, Nelson Mandela Park Public School. Free of charge and with childcare on site, the program also includes animated and feature films, installation art, workshops, panel discussions and post-screening chats with filmmakers. This year the festival staff created a program for children in collaboration with the public schools that surround Regent Park. Chandra hopes to expand this program to link it to the school curriculum and to find ways to connect the children to broader issues such as women's rights and human rights.

This year's festival presented a number of interesting and relevant documentaries dealing with issues that ranged from explorations of ethnic and sexual identity to the impact of globalization on people in developing countries and in North America. *China Blue*, a clandestinely shot film, portrayed the experiences of a 14-year-old Chinese jean factory worker; *You Don't Look Like a Lesbian*, is a personal exploration of identity by a woman of Korean heritage who laments that it is easier for her to say I'm gay in English than in Korean; the tumultuous *Shadya* about a young Palestinian woman, an international martial arts champion of combative independence, who heartbreakingly disappears into domesticity after marriage; the strangely compelling *Marjoun and the Flying Scarf*, a coming of age film about a Muslim teenager rendered inarticulate by internal conflict over her Arab identity; *I Keep Them in My Heart*, an urban Aboriginal woman's personal narrative about the gifts of land she receives from her grandfather; and the deeply disturbing *Can You Love Me?*, which follows a Toronto artist within the very intimate process of her public art project.



Sanjay Talreja, *Cricket and the Meaning of Life*, 2006. Courtesy: the filmmaker.

These films emerge from the immigrant diasporas that make up the backbone of the City of Toronto. Chandra herself came to Toronto as an immigrant from Bangalore in 2000, drawn by the possibilities Canada represented. In the highrise apartment that she shared with her husband and another roommate, she realized for the first time what it meant to be an immigrant. She felt isolated. Many of her other immigrant neighbours were not interested in forming a community; she told me they were "dreaming of the suburbs." And of course, there was the racism. When she embarked on university studies she chose to do a placement in Regent Park, mostly because it was nearby. And it was in Regent Park that she found people who looked upon their neighbourhood as home. It was the community-mindedness that drew her in. This resonated with me.

Born in Cochrane, Ontario and raised in Montreal, I migrated to Toronto 10 years before Chandra arrived here. I had come to work in Regent Park, a place I knew little about, certainly not what it represented to the rest of the city. What I knew, or rather felt, was the same sense of being home, of being part of a fierce and edgy community to which you could not be indifferent. I also related to the sense of immigrant isolation, despite having been born in small town northern Ontario — could you get more Canadian? I am an African Canadian and, as such, have always been aware that I occupy a separate space from other Canadians — a space that never felt equal.

Sanjay Talreja nimbly captures this reality in *Cricket and the Meaning of Life*. The film follows the development of a team of young Toronto cricket players who have a passion for the game that was introduced to their ancestors by an imperial power; a game whose crown Black and Brown people have long since taken from their former "masters." I was pulled into the film when the young captain of the team, the child of Indian immigrants, noted that there are no "true" Canadians playing cricket in Toronto. An interesting statement from a boy born and raised in Canada, at what point do Brown and Black Canadians feel we can claim our citizenship?

What if you have no sanctioned rights to citizenship? The Festival does not overlook the desperation experienced by those who do not have status in Canada. In the docupoem, *Borderless*, director Min Sook Lee captures the stories of those, in the words of the narrator, "unknown people" who make up the "third-world economy inside Canada." In a simulated telephone call, a piece of theatre woven into the documentary, glimpses of a conversation between the narrator and Angela, an undocumented domestic worker, are juxtaposed with the anonymous backdrop of Toronto at night. Angela is one of 200,000 invisible, anonymous souls that make this country, "this city hustle." She is here taking care of other people's children and other people's dirt to save enough money to send home. Sometimes Angela imagines that her employers' children are her own and hopes that her daughter won't come to hate her. This is a dilemma to which many young people and parents in Regent Park can relate.

Of course, the showcase that was best attended by Regent Park residents was the screening of films made by Regent Park youth, participants in the award-win-

MIn Sook Lee, *Borderless*, 2006, video still.
Courtesy: the artist.

ning local media arts program, Regent Park Focus. I sat behind a group of boys who would exclaim and laugh whenever they saw one of their friends on screen. A film student myself, I was impressed with the quality of their productions and the clarity of their storytelling. Their work included a film by three girls about wearing hijab; a mature and poignant film about the experiences of local immigrant business owners; documentaries on violent video games and being a hip-hop artist; and the adventures of a safety superhero called Bike Man. The young actor in the title role of *Bike Man* seemed especially engaged by his new art and was in attendance the next day, impatient to take advantage of his access to fimmaker David "Sudz" Sutherland who brought his most recent production, *Doomstown*, to the festival.

After the screening all the young filmmakers moved to the front of the auditorium to answer questions. Project staff told us that their vision was to give "voice to young people" to "depict their world view." When someone from the audience asked what it felt like to be on camera, one of the filmmakers responded, "Embarrassing at first, but it felt good."

When, in the 1940s and 1950s, social work professors, politicians and planners replaced ramshackle houses with tidy apartments and townhouses and closed off the streets to create a park, Regent Park, everyone was excited by the prospect of modern housing and a healthy community for low income people. Unfortunately, the experiment essentially walled off the Park (as it's known to community members) from the rest of the city. Coupled with the relentless poverty, a violent public profile and the transformation of Regent Park from mainly white to mainly Black and Brown with each aftershock of globalization, the rest of the city just wanted it to go away. The wish was granted in the form of the much-touted redevelopment of Regent Park with its emphasis on reconnecting the community with the rest of the city and making it healthier by mixing the incomes. Ironically, like many of the city's "revitalization" schemes, the tremendous sense of community that residents of Regent Park have built over 60 years is at risk of being undermined by this transformation.

It is under these conditions that Chandra, herself a filmmaker, decided to start the Regent Park Film Festival. "Film is a community thing. It's immediate. You meet, see a film, talk about it after." Chandra wanted the festival to be used to help people relate to one another and create community through this shared experience. She could not have come at a better time.

And so I found myself in a space where the invisible was made visible. Where people from across Toronto and from the local community had chosen to sit in the dark, together. Where the art of filmmaking was enjoyed, demystified and decorporatized. And where we sought a sense of community and connection that embraces diversity, not as a sideshow to the main event, but as fundamental to what makes us a community.

For further information the Festival see www.regentparkfilmfestival.com

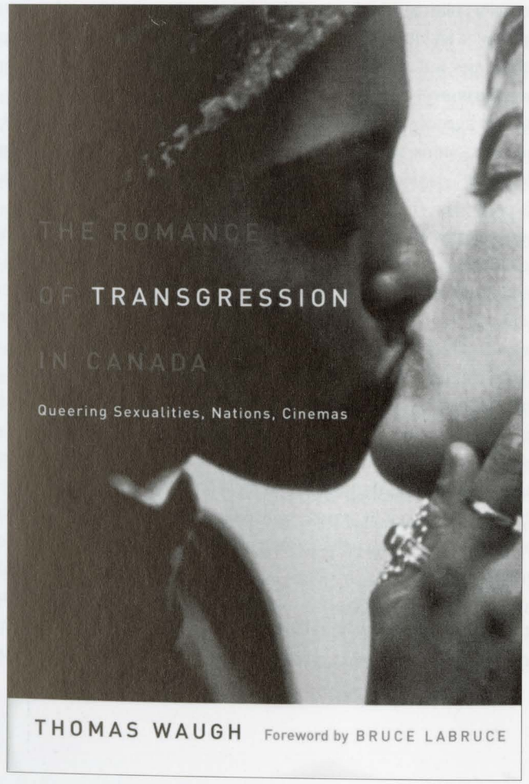
Maureen Thompson worked in Regent Park for 16 years in the early years of Regent Park Focus and at the Regent Park Community Health Centre. She will always carry with her a respect and sense of wonder for its residents and their stories of how they got here and how and why they stay.

Chandra Siddan. Director, Regent Park Film Festival, 2006.
Courtesy: the author.

The Shame and The Glory: *The Romance of Transgression in Canada: Queering Sexualities, Nations, Cinemas*

by Thomas Waugh, Foreword by Bruce LaBruce
McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006
review by Andrew James Paterson

This most welcome volume announces three of its many intentions in its subtitle. Within this nation-state, there is a plurality in the subtitle with the transitive "queering" referring to a never-ending process rather than any limited goal or definition. This book provides a sizable history of Canadian moving pictures, their makers and the institutions permitting (and repressing) them. Having published previous titles including *Hard to Imagine* (1996) and *The Fruit Machine* (2000), a collection of his essays and reviews for the formative Toronto queer journal *The Body Politic*, Waugh is renowned for his touring mock-pedantic presentational lectures on cults and sub-cults of beefcake. He also has a history of anti-censorship activism, and not only in relation to his own publishing career.



For *Romance of Transgression*, Waugh appropriates both the title and the tone of a 1952 National Film Board animation titled *The Romance of Transportation in Canada*. Drawing upon queer-performative theorists Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Judith Butler as well as Michel Foucault's concept of governmentality or activist government, Waugh seldom loses his anecdotal timbre. He is often strategically dry, but too politically engaged to be arid. Aloofness and hyper-intellectual avant-gardism are indeed pet peeves of the professor's. Post-structuralist "death of the author" theories are not particularly relevant to queers and subaltern minorities who have experienced voices denied, and autobiography is significant to both this author and his field of subjects. So are bodies.

Transgression is not a liberal word. It acknowledges and even celebrates borders, boundaries, and shame — the concluding essay in this volume is titled "Of Bodies, Shame and Desire." The process of queering sexualities, nations and cinemas is eternal, and borders or boundaries that demand both transgression and violation aren't going to be collapsing anytime soon. Besides, isn't Canada a post-modernist nation? It certainly has been a nation-state linked by transportation and communications systems marked by their own intrinsic checkpoints with wildly fluctuating codes and regulations.

It has been remarked that the Canadian mentality is essentially bureaucratic[1] and, whether or not such quasi-essentialist labeling is accurate, Canada has always had less the frontier mindset than its omnipotent Southern neighbour. If American gay liberation commenced with the 1969 Stonewall riots (in which drag queens were the prime resisters), Canada's began cautiously with the same year's Omnibus Bill.2 Yet Canada's foundation, built upon les deux nations (not to mention the First Nations, who did come first), arguably provides structural encouragement toward counting past binary mentalities.

How queer can a default nation be or become? Its relative lack of revolutionary machismo aside, the gradual transformation of Canada from colonies to nation-state permits a fluidity at odds with any fixed national essence or identity. Such lack of definition, despite all those state apparatus devoted to building and then reinforcing essential Canadian masculinities and femininities, allows a plurality of possible identifications. Transfolk have insisted that everybody count past two (and well beyond three). Bisexuals have also problematized the number two, and those letters just keep proliferating. With tongue not entirely in cheek, Waugh suggests, "why not consider BLLAGTITTISQQ as an at last pronounceable acronym: bisexual, lesbian, leather, asexual/celibate, gay, transsexual, intersex, transgendered, two-spirited, intergenerational, sex-worker, questioning, queer....Have I left you out?"[3] Considerations of race, ethnicity, class, looks, age, ability (have I left you out?) notwithstanding, all of these letters represent constituencies standing against mandatory heterosexist assumptions.

Waugh moves beyond a Montréal and Toronto binarism to recognize Vancouver as the third Canadian urban centre that has been seriously queered and will thus continue its queering. He looks at a trope of works involving queer adults returning to their regional homes, and also to queerable spaces removed from urban hostility and regimentality. But he also insists that, in the Canadian film industries (whether commercial or government-funded), where sex goes money is certain to follow, and the money shots are in the big cities, along with the sex trade, pornography and tearooms. It is significant that his lengthy acronym includes "A" for Asexual (or anti-consumption) and "S" for Sex-Trade Worker (hyper-consumption).

To put things more succinctly, this tome is all about bodies. It focuses on sexual and sexually-politicized bodies working either against or within bureaucratic bodies — sometimes private corporations, though overwhelmingly he is referring to governmental agencies. The NFB (our dear old uncle) is omnipresent, receiving its own deserved chapter, and then of course there is AIDS. The trajectory of Waugh's essays begins with the Cold War, then the so-called Sexual Revolution, and the incipient queer rumblings in Montreal and Toronto. He pays respects to different regions and then zeroes in on the NFB. That institution's prescribed sobriety, its insistence on verite, is revealed by Waugh to be a Canadian constant, intrinsic to even the most audacious queer fictions in his national canon. Documentary is more than a cousin of autobiography, and autobiographical impulses are too strong to be airbrushed away.

It is Waugh's autobiographical imperative to temporarily abandon chromosome counting for his seventh essay — "Boys and the Beast." That beast is athletics, especially hockey, Canada's national sport. Waugh examines nearly a half-century of sports films, many of them made for television as part of both nationalist and corporate mandates to make sure there aren't too many sissy boys who don't appreciate sports. Within that lifespan, the author has himself progressed from "the failed peewee to the supreme pool queen of the Montréal Y..."[4] In these films, homophobia and homo-sociality and homo-eroticism uncomfortably share the same arenas and locker rooms.

Waugh's next essay, "Sex, Money, and Sobriety," shifts to other arenas where men's and women's bodies are performing and thus on display, and usually within complex and contradictory scenarios. Pornography and prostitution involve both money and "acting." Again, documentary sobriety is never that far below the radar, especially in Canadian porn and meta-porn,[5] when structural reliance on the American porn economy montages with Canadian autobiographical imperatives.

In this eighth chapter, Waugh also examines both boy and girl Canadian home-grown porn, and then offers various tea-room encounters on film or video as bucolic sexual moments outside of or transcending exchange economies. In his next essay, "Anti-Retroviral: A Test of Who We Are," he surveys a variety of Canadian AIDS-related works — experimental, activist, informational and more. Due to the nature of this beast, there are scores of AIDS-related works that were made for the then-immediate situation (The Epidemic) and not for any sort of definitive canon, and are thus not referred to within this volume. However, Waugh manages to recognize many works by men and women across the nation before focusing on three artists who have contributed sizable bodies of AIDS-related films and tapes — John Greyson, Richard Fung and Mike Hoolboom.

The concluding essay: "Of Bodies, Shame, and Desire," extends the stigmatization of HIV+ and other historically-marked bodies. Waugh looks at several works that defy assimilationist complacency and platitudes about "the end of gay."[6] In the century when post-nationalist globalism and post-corporeality mesh all too easily with religious fundamentalisms and other repressive mindsets, "bodies (and bottoms) are the bottom line."[7]

The Romance of Transgression also offers a second component, consisting of a portrait gallery of transgressors — 340 of them. This useful resource references names and provides brief portraits of Canadian queer and queer-positive directors, writers, producers, festival programmers, actors, writers and even a few plain old celebrities. Waugh is knowledgeable about details such as, for example, the queer second camera-operator hypothetically responsible for the officially-unintended homoerotic content of many straight-directed films — the chapters concerning "The Cold War," the "Sexual Revolution," the NFB and, of course, athletics, are ripe with such speculations. Originally, he had intended to restrict the portrait gallery to 100 names, but this proved futile. There are, of course, a few names missing, a few bibliographical glitches, and, for spatial reasons, most portrait-gallery entries are included by virtue of their specifically same-sex content titles — the higher the sexualized body count, the better. This means that Waugh frequently misses titles by the same artists that may not be capital "G" gay but are most certainly queer in their mindsets. Waugh includes many individuals and organizations that he considers "queer-friendly," which is a usefully vague term. These two adjectives can unambiguously refer to straight folks who have been crucially supportive, or it could refer to an intriguing or frustrating lack of public-definition regarding certain individuals an "are they, or aren't they?" Since Waugh is a politicized film historian, his bias toward social cinema prevails, although he doesn't fall short with video art and even some installation. While television is not the professor's cup of tea, the role of both the public CBC and the private networks in the formation and enforcement of desired masculinities and femininities is placed under his acerbic lens.

Generally, I think The *Romance of Transgression* succeeds in its intentions. A slippage between queer, meaning perversely subversive, and queer, meaning same-sex bodies, frequently leaks through, but Waugh doesn't apologize for his biases. He is a long-time Montréaler and a proud Stonewaller. He makes no apologies for the privileged space granted to artists working when queer was an insult rather than a compliment, and who have been relatively ignored or de-queered in previous histories. For the information and gossip about pioneers like renowned animator Norman McLaren, Québecois auteur Claude Jutra, pioneering documentarian Margaret Westcott, and many other artists and the institutions that they have transgressed, this book is invaluable. As a reference book on ongoing queerings of Canadian cinema and their infrastructures, this is also a very useful volume. Let's have more.

Andrew James Paterson is a video artist, writer and general observer based in Toronto. His name is not omitted from Professor Waugh's list of 340 movers and shakers.

Notes:

1. See AA Bronson, Introduction, *Media Works*, N.E. Thing Co. Ltd. Art Metropole, 1992.
2. The Omnibus Bill removed the clauses dealing with "buggery" and "gross indecency" from the Criminal Code but the state did not completely remove itself from the bedrooms of the nation as group sex, intergenerational sex, and other "perversions" remained illegal and continue to be. p. 541.
3. p.10.
4. p.182.
5. Waugh deploys the term "meta-porn" to encompass a "spectrum of avant-garde practices...referencing explicit imported film or video" in many works by Canadian artists, specifically during the later 1980s, (p. 230).
6. Bert Archer. *The End of Gay (And the Death of Heterosexuality)* (Toronto, Doubleday, 1999), Canada.
7. p.327.

The Suspended Gaze: Stephen Andrews: *Selected Works from the Salah J. Bachir Collection*

6 September – 9 October 2006
Justina M. Barnicke Gallery
Curated by Sarah Stanners
review by Amish Morrell

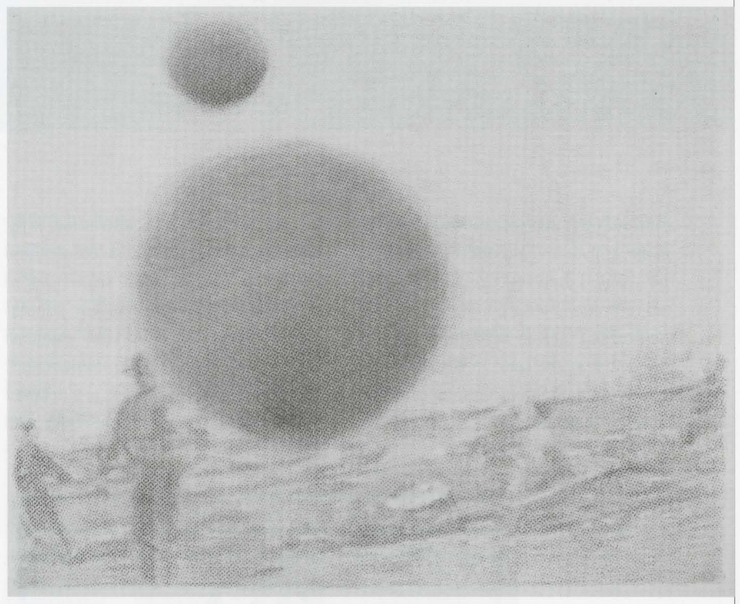
Arranged in a vast grid across one of the walls of the gallery was *The Quick and the Dead*, 192 of Stephen Andrews' crayon rubbings carefully rendered from video stills. Each image in this series is made up of a soft array of cyan, magenta, yellow and black dots, made by rubbing watercolor pencil crayons on parchment paper that has been placed over the surface of a window screen, mirroring the four-color separation process of mechanical printing. Subtly and beautifully rendered, *The Quick and the Dead* foregrounds the formal qualities of each piece, inviting the viewer to consider the artist's technical process, as well as the narrative sequence of the images. And though one can identify vague elements of a landscape, and a man laying on the ground, the subject matter is initially ambiguous.

It is this very ambiguity, opened up by Andrews' material process, that complicates the nature of the viewer's relationship with the subject matter. This installation depicts a scene that has become all too familiar during the American occupation of Iraq. *The Quick and the Dead* was made from video footage shown on CBC, depicting the bombing of an Iraqi convoy. The man whose body appears in the images was an Iraqi soldier who had been washing himself in a basin by the roadside when a passing American soldier heard a rustling in the bushes. The soldier fired a grenade and we see the Iraqi victim's wounded body, the resulting fire, and the soldier who had shot the grenade, sent afterwards to clean up the man's remains. Because this sequence of events is not readily apparent, the installation requires that the viewer piece together the unfolding event in their imagination, translating the singular images back into a facsimile of the video clip from which they were culled. This event is recreated again, where each of a larger group of 600 stills appear in a short video animation. In motion this event becomes easier to read. One can see the flames licking the man's legs, notice the soldier's failed efforts to extinguish the fire, and see the turn of the soldier's head as he surveys the landscape and then looks back at the viewer.

Stephen Andrews, *The Quick and the Dead*,crayon rubbings on parchment, 2004. Courtesy: the artist.

Here the viewer pieces together the disparate visual elements of the installation to make the scene legible, drawing out a process that is normally done unconsciously. While it depicts a scene to which we have arguably become inured through the repetition of images of war, here the event appears slowly. In this rendering of a moment of death, time slows down. Paradoxically, the beauty of these images is also what evokes their horror. If this work depicts violence in a manner that is aesthetic, it does so in order to make us look more closely at how war is mediated. These images work as an antidote to the proliferation of journalistic and documentary images that come ready to be dismissed, without asking anything of us. These artistic renderings in the *Quick and the Dead* accomplish something different: Andrews' images, whether they evoke pleasure or horror or uncertainty, produce in the viewer an unsettling vulnerability.

Other works in this show, *P.O.V.* and *Tear Gas at Biddhu, West Bank* similarly reduce the formal expression of a global image-making apparatus — the infinitely reproducible news photograph or satellite broadcast footage — to formal elements through artistic rendering. In *Friendly Fire (a BBC cameraman also received minor injuries but continued to film with his blood dripping on the lens)* two globular droplets of blood, like the dots of pencil crayon that make up the image, float in the foreground, making visible the shift in scale between the camera operator and the scene he was documenting. Andrews' technical process not only draws the viewer's attention to processes of visual mediation but also depicts a corporeal wounding suffered by the witness.



Stephen Andrews, *Friendly Fire*, crayon rubbing on parchment, 2003. Courtesy: the artist.

In Andrews' earlier work amidst the AIDS crisis of the 1980s and 1990s he developed an aesthetic approach to representing questions of death and mortality that informs his current work incorporating images of war and violence. In *365 Sunsets*, a stock photo image of one sunset is silkscreened 365 times onto a long piece of pig intestine. This repeated ending becomes a recurring moment, hidden away within the overlapping folds. *365 Sunsets* allows the viewer to behold a year, compressing time and repeating a series of sequential moments onto this corporeal surface. Installed in several vitrines are works from the series *Safe*, where he has photocopied images from porn onto latex, a material intended to protect us from the risks suggested by these images of sexual intimacy. On another wall, two framed rainbows, *Parenthesis (No Gold)*, silkscreened onto pig intestines quote the space of the room. In these works temporality figures into the work in yet another way: Curator Sarah Stanners notes that the intestines of animals were once used to divine the future. The title of the curatorial essay is *Forecast*, though it is clear that this is neither simply about forecasting weather nor about forecasting the outcome of war.

Instead this work denies viewers their ability to readily forecast the meaning of, and their response to these images. Sampled from television newscasts, weekly magazines, and pornography, Andrews' works facilitate an encounter that evades the foreclosure that these mediums impose. Through his laborious reworkings of these consumable and disposable images he creates an opening for the viewer's projections. The works enable us to apprehend the distance between points of color and the total image, between the event and its representation, between corporeality and the miniscule drops of blood that make it up, between a moment and those that come after. These images thus describe not information, but relation and mediation.

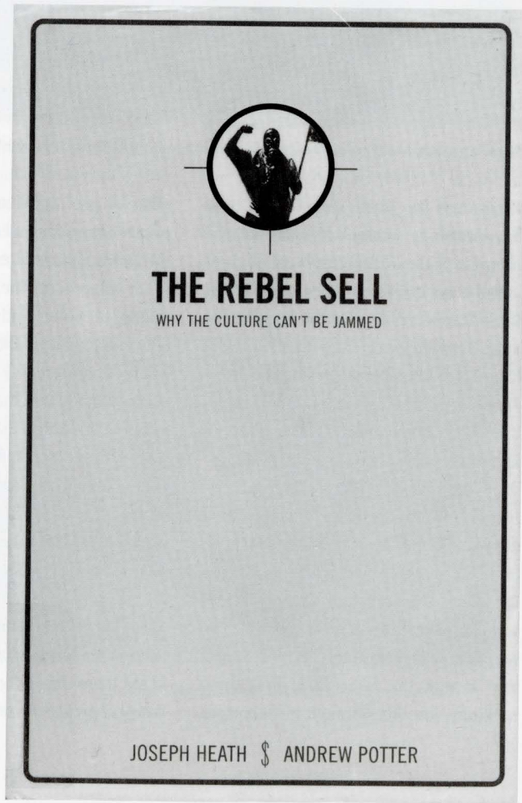
With thanks to Sarah Stanners, Stephen Andrews, and the Justina M. Barnicke Gallery.

Amish Morrell writes about temporality in contemporary art and photography. He also teaches at the University of Toronto and the Ontario College of Art and Design.

Bold New Contrarians or Same Old Whiners?: Andrew Potter and Joseph Heath's *The Rebel Sell*

Harper Collins, 2004
review by Vaughn Barch

Andrew Potter and Joseph Heath have an image, a myth and a product to sell to us: the image is their roles as curmudgeonly and contrarian media pundits, the myth is their belief that they hold the magic keys to revitalizing the spirit of dissent in our society and their product is their cute little book, *The Rebel Sell*.



It is not a bad book. It is interesting, witty, full of fascinating facts and anecdotes, and displaying enough solid references to classic philosophy and current popular media studies to comfortably establish their credentials as critical commentators. The first section of the book is a detailed description of the spirit of rebellion and anti-consumerism, as manifested in music and clothes, and how these feeble gestures ultimately feed back into consumerism. The second section ties these themes into society, marketing and political activism. For the most part, their essential theories, suggestions and conclusions are ones that I agree with. Unfortunately, the weakness running through this book is an annoying tendency to vaguely accentuate the negative, and a perverse sensibility in myself as a critic feels compelled to respond to them in the same tone.

Their main argument is simple: global corporations controlling the mass-media have adopted, co-opted and corrupted the methods and expressions of political dissent and resistance in our culture. While this is essentially true, very importantly missing from the author's arguments are the many significant caveats and exceptions from this truth. It is from this premise that they imply, in tone, that therefore resistance is futile.

Potter and Heath approach their arguments within the format of a classic tag-team wrestling match: at the outset, they declare that they do not identify themselves individually within the context of any particular argument in the book, which comes across a bit awkwardly when the text goes into personal narratives about one of the author's experiences in young punk rebellion. They then proceed to set up and knock down a series of rather floppy punching bags in a smooth but evasive style that strives to deflect any concrete criticisms of their particular arguments.

They use the logic theory game of The Prisoner's Dilemma (which frames competition and consumerism into a sort of unavoidable arms-race) as a philosophic metaphor in order to explain, or perhaps somewhat halfheartedly justify, the prevalence of obvious transgressions against common-sense existence such as McDonald's hamburgers, big-box stores, ugly suburban tract housing sprawl and sport-utility vehicles. Their explanation is that these are the things that are desired by our teeming masses of human citizens, and by this quasi-democratic argument, they are forgivable. They ask innocently why McDonald's fast food is the object of alt-activists' scorn when the comparably ubiquitous Subway chain escapes notice (the unstated answer is that Subway does not coerce its clientele into embracing fealty to the ideology of a satanic clown). They sneer at livable neighbourhoods with tree-lined streets and health food stores as luxuries only enjoyed by affluent university professors, elitist by nature and ideologically suspect. They play the populist card when it suits them. Ultimately, their tone reflects the same sort of pretensions they are denigrating.

They sneer at livable neighbourhoods with tree-lined streets and health food stores as luxuries only enjoyed by affluent university professors, elitist by nature and ideologically suspect.

Potter and Heath focus their main attacks on Kalle Lasn and Naomi Klein, the *Adbusters* and *No-Logo* tangent of their thesis, "Books like *No Logo*, magazines like *Adbusters* and movies like *American Beauty* do not undermine consumerism; they reinforce it. This isn't because the authors, editors or directors are hypocrites. It's because they fail to understand the true nature of consumer society …"[1] We might presume that *Adbusters* is in some sense merely a form of penance for a coterie of morally conflicted advert-designer-media whores, but their critique of its situationalist roots is overly dismissive. Their sniping at Naomi Klein is ill-called for; she remains an eloquent critic of the mass delusions driving consumerism. Potter and Heath cannot tackle her head-on and instead delight in nipping at her heels. When she speaks to the effects of urban gentrification, they accuse her of being pretentious, which might be true, but it does not really invalidate her premise.

Potter and Heath's indulgence in barbed digs at Hal Niedzviecki's cultural observations in such a manner that I am not entirely certain whether they are critiquing, dismissing, endorsing, referencing or merely addressing Niedzviecki's arguments in his book of cultural analysis *Hello I'm Special*. Niedzviecki's disgruntlement at the mass-media's appropriation of the spirit of individuality seems to mirror Potter and Heath's problems addressing these issues, and my personal suspicion is that Niedzviecki seems to be wrestling with many of the same arguments as the authors. Perhaps they are merely a bit miffed that he appears to be working the same side of the street.

The authors go on at disapproving length about those annoying uncouth youths who kicked over mailboxes and broke fast food restaurant windows at the Seattle WTO protest rallies and riots. Potter and Heath claim that the World Trade Organization and the International Monetary Fund sincerely have the welfare of Third World peasants foremost in mind when they make their decisions, "Antiglobalization activists have taken to protesting every major gathering of the WTO …in doing so they put themselves in direct conflict with representatives of precisely those Third World interests they claim to protect."[2]

The authors invoke the rave sequence in the movie *Matrix2* as an illustration for their point that young activists often indulge in street parties and music festivals as a substitute for concrete political action, "The Beastie Boys called everyone's bluff a long time ago, when they recorded a "protest" song with the anthemic title: "You Gotta Fight for Your Right (to Party)." In the end, this is what most counter-cultural rebellion comes down to."[3] While this argument is valid, they miss a significant part of the big picture: a utilitarian perspective on society must include "quality of life" in the equation, and our collective quality of life realistically includes relaxation and socializing. Potter and Heath decry the left-alt-activist obsession with these colourful

diversions as a tangent away from the boring, nitty-gritty, nuts'n'bolts, day-to-day, hard labour of real political activism, that which is not celebrated or flaunted in our society. Regrettably, they make absolutely no effort whatsoever to describe or celebrate this cornerstone of social change that they claim to cherish so much: the exhausting effort of political activism required to eventually lead to legislative change.

Their essential final argument is that there is no substitute for plain ordinary dull legislative change in our parliaments. Well, of course there isn't! Who could disagree with this? The authors point to the abolition of slavery and the suffrage movement as social changes that were affected by the process of legislation. While this is true, they ignore the fact that legislative change is the final step in a long series of processes, including the music, parties, riots and demonstrations that make the final groaning shifts of political will possible.

We can confidently acknowledge that the mass-media tentacles of the corporate system continually appropriate and pervert popular expressions of resistance. The endless cycle of the apportion of radical thought by the powers that be extends way back to before the career of Jesus Christ. A somewhat more thoughtful and nuanced approach to this phenomenon might be appreciated. One of my favorite books on this subject is: *Bohemian Paris 1830 – 1930* by Jerrold Seigal. He describes the cultural conflict between the staid bourgeoisie band and those kooky bohemians, but he concludes that their mutual antagonism actually functions as a subtle symbiotic system, each feeding the other, intentionally or unintentionally, as a thriving cultural Petri dish.

While Potter and Heath have admirable aspirations — they seek to achieve the sublime astringent insights of classic American cultural vivisectors of the early 20th century like H. L. Mencken (known for his sharp criticisms of the follies and contradictions of American society) — they fall short of their target, unwittingly duped into mere wrong-side messenger-shooting in this neo-con era.

It is far too easy to play at being a curmudgeon. In order to fully assume the curmudgeon's mantle, one must have lived and suffered the degradations of progress. In order to claim the mantle of the contrarian, one must open the next door down the hall past Monty Python's argument clinic, the one that takes a step past mere contra-diction, into true argument: the final element required to make a resonant argument is the one lacking in Potter and Heath presentation: heart-felt inspired insight. The exquisite *schadenfreude* of the elderly theatre-box dwellers of *The Muppet Show*, flinging their grapes of disgruntlement and their running critique upon the poor best efforts of frogs and mortals, is temporarily amusing, but ultimately unsatisfying.

Grumblers and whiners: our planet is chock full o'them, and regrettably Potter and Heath are planted in the midst of this dull chorus: we the voters, who hate cynical politicians, and keep on re-electing the same ones. They have the talent and intent to act as a positive force for social change, but instead they sit in the bleachers, sniggering and snarking at anyone who has the guts to try to do anything about it, however imperfectly.

Vaughn Barch is a Toronto-based artist, critic and construction labourer. He is fascinated by animal behaviour (cats) and human history (The Peloponnesian Wars).

Notes:
1. p.99.
2. p.249.
3. p.64.

Let's Pretend We're Bunny Rabbits: Cheli Nighttraveller's *Binky Binky Bunny*

AKA *Gallery*
6 October – 14 October, 2006
review by Anthea Black

It's a thick waft of hay and straw that I first encounter as I enter Cheli Nighttraveller's *Binky Binky Bunny* performance installation at AKA Gallery in Saskatoon.

The gallery is divided into three distinct spaces. From the entrance, there is only a short plinth to sit on and further into the gallery, there is a clothesline strung with photos and notes in the relatively unadorned white space. A short, unpainted picket fence dominates the space and establishes a boundary between myself and the performer. A thick carpet of hay and straw spread on the inside of the partition casts a warm glow onto the petting-zoo-cum-barnyard studio apartment complete with futon, wireless internet and hay-bale dinette set. The cohabitants of this curious scene nestle together in the hay, Cheli Nighttraveller, clad entirely in pink (lab coat, tights, push-up bra and dress,) and her collaborator Binky the Bunny.

Nighttraveller is living in this space with Binky as dedicated, interdependent collaborators, while using her ongoing practice of storytelling to explore the victimization and abuse she experienced beginning in 2001. The LiveJournal archive that she diaries in every day of the performance plays a similar role to the comfy bunny hutch. Brightly coloured, cute and inviting, the web site offers only the slightest clues as to the trauma it speaks to.[1] Instead, Nighttraveller mainly uses the site to describe her daily tasks of greeting and speaking with gallery visitors, cleaning the cage and eating lunch with Binky.

While I am physically distanced from Nighttraveller and Binky's private living quarters, when I enter the space of the installation my desire for an invitation for performative contact and intimacy with Nighttraveller and the bunny compels me to lurk near the gate. This distance establishes a performative space that the audience is temporarily not allowed into, and people respect this by staying outside of the gate until invited in. If the knee-high fence were higher, I would peer through the slats, an uneasy parallel of a voyeur or passive spectator, but instead I sit on the plinth and wait patiently for Nighttraveller's invitation.

This situating of the viewer in the gallery space positions us to negotiate a set of personal and narrative boundaries across the fence, online through the LiveJournal and in the initial entrance to the bunny hutch. Eventually within the inner space, we become witnesses to her narrative and collaborators in the cultural meaning of her story.

Nighttraveller creates a verbal archive of trauma[2] by telling each visitor some details about how she survived domestic abuse and rape, allowing us to get close to her

Cheli Nighttraveller. Cheli and Binky's home (a view that shows the kitchen, flanked by Cheli's office and Binky's room), 2006. Photo: Cindy Baker. Courtesy: the artist.

trauma and to temporarily inhabit the vulnerable space with her. Describing how she uses the relationship created between herself and the spectator to "make something that is normally inaccessible accessible to people," Nighttraveller renegotiates the performance with each new person that comes into the space.

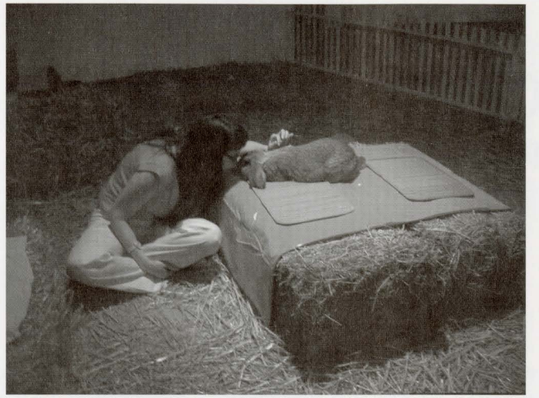
Nighttraveller's choice to perform her story in Saskatoon puts her at risk of disclosing the abuses she endured to her home community of family, past friends and the strong network of Aboriginal artists that mentored her. Over the course of the performance, she reveals details of her abuse to each of the people who enter the space and the range of reactions to her story enables Nighttraveller to transform her understanding of herself: "I wasn't a victim, I was myself playing a victim." As we talk, Nighttraveller draws connections between her need to escape victimhood by creating a *specific* space for performing trauma and constructing an atmosphere of safe comfort within the bunny hutch, within AKA and the gallery's surrounding communities.

The bunny has been a longstanding symbol of victimization for Nighttraveller, appearing in her past performance *Bad Bad Bunny*, where she created a narrative about killing her rabbit as a child, and here in *Binky Binky Bunny*, where she relates to the bunny both as a victim and intimate, significant companion. While this symbol has a very distinct personal history, Nighttraveller also retells an adage passed through three generations of her family, "Until you learn how to treat your animals well, you won't know how to take care of people," as being a connection of shared values and lineage between herself, her father and her mooshum (grandfather).[3] Her reference to family lineage informs her relationship of care and respect for the rabbit throughout the performance.

At first, Binky seems to be a docile collaborator, someone who compels the audience to draw closer and develop a gentle bond with the performance. I step into the space, aware not to disturb Binky, letting Nighttraveller take the lead in establishing contact between the rabbit and myself. We discuss the behaviour of the bunny, and how their relationship has developed over the course of the week. During my visit, the rabbit seems generally happy, and "shows off" by doing an elated, leaping dance called a "binky." Binky's presence in the performance occasionally deflects attention away from Nighttraveller as she recounts a painful moment. When the rabbit performs a "binky," Nighttraveller takes this as a cue to play a PowerPoint presentation that depicts a menacing bunny-suited person with huge teeth, and erect, distended ears. She shows the presentation to people individually or in groups, as another part of the narrative that builds tension between the happiness of the live rabbit and the upsetting reality of the stories she is telling.

Cheli Nighttraveller. Cheli with several members of the public, including her father, Mervyn Nighttraveller, 2006. Photo: Cindy Baker. Courtesy: the artist.

Nighttraveller's play between humour and horror charges the performance with tension, a feminist performance strategy that Tanya Mars has argued can destabilize the assumption that "masochistic body-based performance work is a true test of our human capacity to withstand and express physical and emotional extremes."[4] Indeed, much of the history of performance art around trauma is populated by artists who use appropriated, simulated or literal violence. For artists who have a direct experience or history of victimization, however, re-presenting violence seems to be a much less productive or downright horrific strategy or aesthetic. Her refusal to use violence as a performative aesthetic puts forward questions about how artists can employ their bodies within performative space to challenge the dominant art-historical narratives that reinforce victimization.



Cheli Nighttraveller. Cheli and Binky sharing some together time at the kitchen table, 2006. Photo: Cindy Baker. Courtesy: the artist.

Mentored by Lori Blondeau, James Luna and Ruth Cuthand, Nighttraveller describes these artists as employing storytelling to "speak openly about great hurts in a way that slaps you silly first."[5] Using laughter as a safer way to express the horror of her own experience, Nighttraveller interrupts the story of her rape and playfully mimics her collaborator's bunny-antics: as he jumps around the hutch, or snacks on hay, she wiggles her nose bunny-style or holds a piece of straw between her teeth. These opposing messages force the audience to interrogate their own assumptions, "what's female and what's funny are both up for grabs."[6] Nighttraveller's use of the petting zoo, the bunny and her pink garb as symbols of her victimization also call into question what "Aboriginal" is. These are important constitutive factors in her self-identification as Half-Breed. Nighttraveller *plays* with constructing these various identities and characters as a coping technique, where humour is an instinctive strategy for survival.[7] When the symbol of the bunny appears in its other, more threatening guise as a masked person in cartoonishly freaky bunny suit, it assists Nighttraveller in her storytelling. Where she struggles to retell or represent the horror of her experiences, she shows the menacing bunny video to destabilize the audience's identification with Binky as loveable, cute and funny. The doubling of the soft bunny image with an aggressive caricature "builds tension and doubt in the gallery surroundings."[8] Nighttraveller's comfy version of femme-drag is another way to create tension. The excess of pink is used for its symbolic potential: it's a vulnerable colour that also smacks of the kind of plucky gender play intent on jamming gender stereotypes and resignifies her body to remove it from the harm that was once inflicted.

.

What began as Nighttraveller's performative storytelling about her horrific abuse became an elaborate discussion that we continued over the next several days of the performance. For every hour we talked, the silence that normally prevents frank and open discussions of abuse seemed increasingly oppressive. Like my moment of "reciprocal disclosure"[9] speaking about the performance in the months after segued to many critical and heartfelt conversations with other cultural workers who had suffered through domestic violence, rape, addiction and poverty, the telling of which had been silenced to the point of erasure.

As this archive of discussion accumulated around Nighttraveller's work, I wondered if within contemporary art dialogues we perpetrate the same silencing effect on artists' expressions of trauma. Silencing trauma raises the stakes for performative confessions in our work and allows the performer to threaten the calm spectatorship of the audience, but it also risks dismissal through well-reasoned academic detachment, and relegates works that deal with trauma to discussions of the avant-garde or experimental. Nighttraveller's telling of trauma defies silence with humour and complexity of personal and cultural meanings, and bravely uses her own story to make space for these stories within artistic dialogues, and outside of them.

Anthea Black is an artist, art-writer and cultural worker based in Calgary.

Notes

1. Cheli Nighttraveller, *Binky Binky Bunny*, http://binkybinky-bunny.livejournal.com/ The use of online storytelling as a public, technologized archiving of trauma in this work would be worth further discussion.
2. I'm loosely borrowing notions of the archive from Judith Halberstam's *A Queer Time and Place*.
3. Benjamin Napatchit as related by Mervyn Nighttraveller, qtd. in Artist Statement, Cheli Nighttraveller.
4. Tanya Mars, "Not Just for Laughs: Women, Performance and Humour" *Caught in the Act an anthology of performance by Canadian Women*, eds, Mars, Tanya and Householder, Johanna (Toronto: YYZ BOOKS, 2004).
5. Cheli Nighttraveller, correspondence with the artist, January 2007.
6. Helen Paris and Angela Ellsworth, "Humor in the (juxta) Posed Body." In *Humour in Women's Comedy*, Lizbeth Goodman (ed.), (Cambridge: Polity Press), 1999.
7. Mars, Paris and Ellsworth all make reference to this strategy.
8. Nighttraveller.
9. Nighttraveller, LiveJournal.

David and Goliath:

Toronto's need for good planning practice

By Ute Lehrer

What a shock! When in early December 2006, and after three long months of intense deliberations, the decision by the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) finally became public, very few people could believe the news: the three developers who had pushed for turning the industrial landscape at Toronto's West Queen West Triangle into polished condominium towers, had won their case. They received the support of the OMB on almost every item in the entire case in spite of a heroic battle fought by Active 18 and supported by the City of Toronto. The site of the confrontation was a stretch along Queen West, which over the past 20 years has morphed into a neighbourhood that is home to a heterogeneous group of people and usages.

There are two competing visions for the West Queen West Triangle. On the one hand are proposals from developers who want to turn the Triangle into a play area for *nouveau bohemiens*. Hordes of young potential condo buyers are lured to the site through slick and hip sales offices, catchy slogans (*Are you on the list?*) and project names that make direct reference to the artistic flair of this part of Queen West. The advertising strategies seem to declare that anybody who moves into this neighbourhood will become an artist by osmosis. On the other hand stands the vision of community groups such as Active 18, which was formed in September of 2005 in response to the initial plans of developers. Active 18 has achieved its own sophisticated view of how development in this part of Toronto should take place. Their proposal combined developers' aspirations for profit with community needs for liveable spaces, addressing the importance of open spaces and demanding good urban design while at the same time asking for housing and work spaces that are accessible for different income levels, life cycles and needs. While they were allowed to speak, their voices were not heard. Active 18 was David to the developers' Goliath. Goliath's skyscraping plans to transform the entire neighbourhood into monolithic chicken coops, won the fight. For now.

The most recent OMB decision made it official. All the talk at provincial and municipal levels about the need for good urban design, intensification and sustainability, proved to be rhetorical. Still, Mayor Miller is willing, finally, to step forward, to fight the provincial decision regarding the West Queen West Triangle, and to question the role of the OMB as a quasi-planning authority for Toronto. Few doubt the legitimacy of the OMB initially. But it seems that this provincial level for making local decisions has reached its expiry date for cities such as Toronto. There is widespread consensus that planning decisions should result from public discussion at the local level. In other words, what the City of Toronto needs is a broad-based, rich and well established discourse that allows room for diverging views, complex ideas and utopian visions rather than having developers, supported by institutional arrangements, dictate the future of the city.

The experience with West Queen West has forged many new alliances. Community groups, architects, artists and designers, academics, city staff and citizens are talking to one another about the need for good planning practice in Toronto. As the largest city in Canada and as a player in the global economy, we can no longer afford to neglect our everyday spaces to be planned — or should I say ruined? — by single-minded developers whose practices of buying up cheap land overheat the market and ironically force them to multiply units in astronomical quantity in order to squeeze profit from the land. We also can't allow for decisions to be made for us by the OMB, an unaccountable, relatively unqualified and inaccessible body. And as a city that prides itself on its diversity, we need to make space available for social practices that are on the margin of the economy. This means, first and foremost, an actual planning strategy for diversity in housing and work places. Only then, can David and Goliath coexist.

THUNDER BAY
ART GALLERY

Tony Hunt, "Hamasta Raven", 1978, cedar bark, paint, red cedar, 98 x 95 x 22
Gift of Charles Peacock, From the Permanent Collection

Travelling?
We are the pause that refreshes.

THADDEUS HOLOWNIA:
The Terra Nova Suite
Circulated by
The Rooms Provincial Art Gallery
April 6 - May 20

SEAN RANDALL:
Plans and Elevations
April 6 - May 6

COASTAL FORMLINE:
Northwest Coast Prints
From The Permanent Collection
May 11 - July 22

(807) 577 - 6427 See Yourself Here www.theag.ca