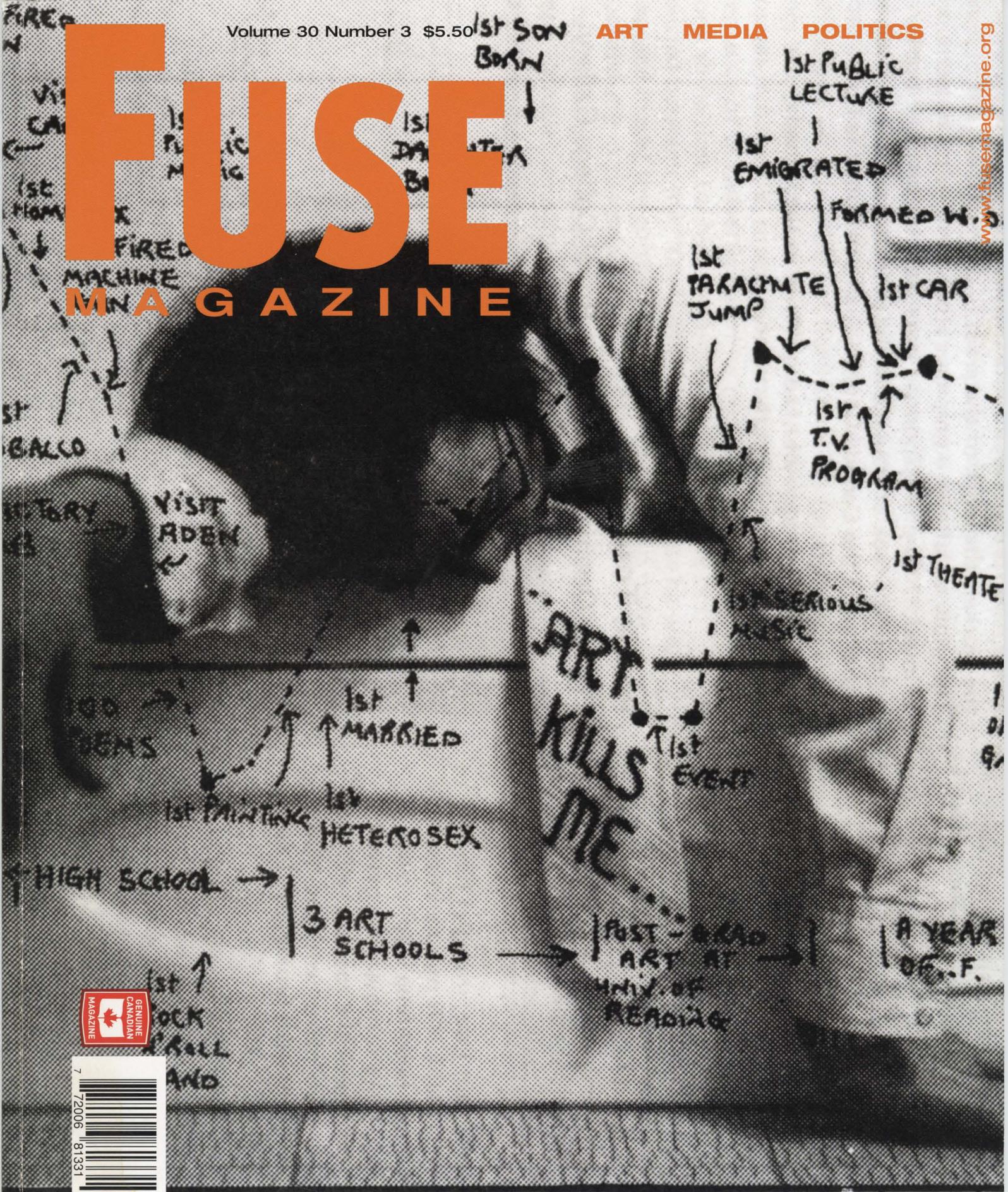


# FUSE

## MAGAZINE

www.fusemagazine.org



FIRED  
 VISIT  
 1st PUBLIC  
 1st HONORARY  
 FIRED  
 MACHINE  
 BALCO  
 VISIT  
 ADEN  
 1st MARRIED  
 1st HETEROSEX  
 HIGH SCHOOL  
 1st ROCK  
 BALL  
 AND

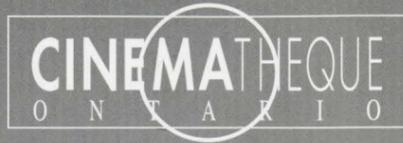
1st SON  
 BORN  
 1st DAUGHTER  
 1st PUBLIC LECTURE  
 1st EMIGRATED  
 FORMED W.O.  
 1st PARACHUTE JUMP  
 1st CAR  
 1st T.V. PROGRAM  
 1st SERIOUS MUSIC  
 1st THEATRE  
 1st EVENT  
 3 ART SCHOOLS  
 POST-GRAD ART AT UNIV. OF READING  
 A YEAR OF...F.

1st PUBLIC LECTURE  
 1st EMIGRATED  
 FORMED W.O.  
 1st CAR  
 1st T.V. PROGRAM  
 1st THEATRE



1958 1962 1964 1966 1967 1969 1970 1971 1972 1973

TORONTO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL GROUP presents



# A SUMMER OF CINEMATHEQUE CLASSICS: 50 YEARS OF JANUS FILMS



PIERROT LE FOU

Get your tickets today!

June 29 - August 18

(416) 968-FILM

[cinemathequeontario.ca](http://cinemathequeontario.ca)



Transforming the way people see the world

[tiffg.ca](http://tiffg.ca)

**PAVED Arts**  
424 20th Street West  
Saskatoon SK S7M 0X4  
[www.pavedarts.ca](http://www.pavedarts.ca)

**April 20 - May 19**  
21  
Cheryl L'Hirondelle  
Divya Mehra  
Jayce Salloum  
Camille Turner  
Gabriel Yahyahkeekoot  
Curated by Elwood Jimmy

**May 25 - June 23**  
Jennifer Crane  
*Becoming*

Tom Sherman  
*Exclusive Memory*  
*Two Decades Later*

Jayce Salloum, *untitled part 4: terra incognita*, video still, 2005.  
Image courtesy of Jayce Salloum and Vtape.

**kamloops ART GALLERY**  
  
[www.kag.bc.ca](http://www.kag.bc.ca)  
465 Victoria Street  
Kamloops, BC  
(250) 377.2400

May 27 to  
September 16

**Nuvisavik: "The Place Where We Weave"**  
**Inuit Tapestries from Arctic Canada**  
A traveling exhibition produced by the Canadian Museum of Civilization  
  
Eleasape ihlulung, Kawthre Kakee, Chasie Akulukjuk  
Inuit Ways, 1979, wool, cotton

**Arctic Treasures:**  
**The Mary and Glenn Martin Collection**

**Selected videos from Arnait Ikajurtigiit,  
Igloodik, Nunavut**

Sponsored by British Columbia Lottery Corporation and London Drugs Limited  
Media Sponsor CBC Radio One

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

**CANDY MTN.**  
Mindy Yan Miller, Catherine Bodmer,  
Susie Major  
**ANIA TRZECIESKI**  
June 14 - July 14

An August Long Weekend of Drawing!  
3rd Annual **DRAW-A-THON**  
An all evening, all night marathon of  
drawing, collaboration and socializing.  
August 4  
**ARTIST TRADING CARDS**  
August 5

**Edmonton Poetry Festival: CORTEX**  
**JEFF KULAK and EMMA HOOPER**  
September 18 - 22

**JEREMY DRUMMOND**  
**JOEL RHEIN**  
September 28 - October 27

**LATITUDE 53**  
CONTEMPORARY VISUAL CULTURE

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

**WALTER PHILLIPS GALLERY**

**Informal Architectures**  
June 22 to September 23, 2007  
Curator: Anthony Kiendl

Lida Abdul  
Edgar Arceneaux/Vincent Galen Johnson/  
Olga Koumoundouros/Matthew Sloly  
Eleanor Bond  
Jimmie Durham  
Dan Graham  
David Hoffos  
Luanne Martineau  
Gordon Matta-Clark  
Rita McKeough  
Ryan Nordlund  
William Pope.L  
Kyohei Sakaguchi

[www.banffcentre.ca/wpg](http://www.banffcentre.ca/wpg)

 **The Banff Centre**  
inspiring creativity

# SONIC PRINT CA

ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY  
PRINT SOLUTIONS

Professional, reliable, and  
guaranteed to be of the  
highest quality  
within your  
budget!

find out how to  
**KEEP IT GREEN**

Tel. 905.943.4971  
info@sonicprint.ca

an invitation to participate

## decentre

concerning artist-run culture | à propos de centres d'artistes

YYZBOOKS has initiated a process intended to generate a collection of texts that evoke and describe the artist-run milieu at this moment. We are looking for compelling, challenging texts that articulate the ideas behind artist-initiated activities, our strengths, weaknesses, challenges, accomplishments and futures.

Artist-run culture is a rhizomatic network of people, projects and places, a work in progress and continually evolving, so we are using network tools to initiate what we hope will be an organic, evolving discussion. These network tools include a wiki, online forums and groups, as well as more conventional email, list-servs, etc.

We invite you to participate. To learn more and to access the network please visit:

[www.decentre.info](http://www.decentre.info)

140 - 401 Richmond St W  
Toronto ON M5V 3A8  
tel 416.598.4546 fax 416.598.2282  
publish@yyzartistsoutlet.org

**YYZBOOKS**

YYZBOOKS acknowledges the generous support of the Canada Council for the Arts. YYZBOOKS is represented by the Literary Press Group of Canada.

*Outlook Express(ed)*  
Lois Andison,  
Susan Collins, and David Rokeby  
curated by Marnie Fleming

29 June - 26 August

*Accumulated Outlook*  
Dara Gellman & Leslie Peters,  
Cheryl Sourkes,  
Jon Thomson & Alison Craighead  
curated by Peter Ride

Og<sub>2</sub>

tel 905.844.4402  
[www.oakvillegalleries.com](http://www.oakvillegalleries.com)

Lexus of Oakville

LEXUS  
THE PURSUIT OF PERFECTION

NATIONWIDE  
AUDIO VISUAL



Jaclyn Shoub  
Heavy Traffic

September 14 to November 22, 2007

**TOM THOMSON MEMORIAL ART GALLERY**

840 First Avenue West, Owen Sound, Ontario N4K 4K4  
519 376-1932 [www.tomthomson.org](http://www.tomthomson.org)

- LIVE ART AUCTION
- SILENT AUCTION
- BREWERY TOUR
- PORTRAIT STUDIO
- HORS D'OEUVRES

have a heart  
art auction



Thursday October 18th  
Steam Whistle Brewing Co.  
255 Bremner Blvd., Toronto

Doors Open 6:30 p.m.  
Live Art Auction 8 p.m.

Admission  
\$35 advance \$40 door  
FOR TICKETS CALL  
416.967.6060 ext. 225

We are still accepting donations of  
painting and photography, please contact  
Janet Hall at 416.967.6060 ext. 225

Proceeds from this charity fund-raiser support Street Haven| [www.streethaven.com](http://www.streethaven.com) | 12953 5175 RR0001

# immersion immersive

explorer l'immersion dans les pratiques artistiques contemporaines  
exploring the immersive in contemporary art practice

demian petryshyn  
carolee schneemann  
caroline lathan-stiefel  
michelle gay  
luis jacob

une publication bilingue avec des textes de susie major  
& randall anderson  
introduction de marcus miller

a bilingual publication with essays by susie major  
& randall anderson  
introduction by marcus miller

article [www.articule.org](http://www.articule.org)

## 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](http://www.fusemagazine.org/write.html)

2007 - PÉRIODIQUES / PERIODICALS

# contents

30.3

6 Editorial  
Alternatives to the Current Order

7 Letter

8 The Anxiety of the "Reality-Based Community"  
by Kirsten Forkert

15 Whose Disability Culture?  
by Rachel Gorman

28 *Then + Then Again*: Talking with Clive Robertson about  
artist-run culture  
interview by Vera Frenkel

38 *Observable Bodies*: Naufus Ramirez-Figueroa's *My Navel*,  
*My Great-Grandfather*  
review by Warren Arcan

39 *Imagined Passage*: Vida Simon's *Excavation Drawings*  
review by Andrew Forster

42 *Institutionalizing Fear*: Don's Gill's *D'arcy Island*  
review by Leila Armstrong

45 *The Need for Vision*: *Asia Pacific Triennial 5*  
review by Haema Sivanesan

48 *Ongoing Probject*: *Tropicália: A Revolution in Brazilian Culture (1967-1972)*  
review by Jacob Korczynski

52 shortFuse  
*Not So Far From Home*  
by Brenda Goldstein

22 Artist Project  
*Cyborg Hybrids*  
by KC Adams

## Columns

Toronto's Discovery District  
CENTRE FOR ADDICTION  
AND MENTAL HEALTH

## Feature



## Reviews



## Short Fuse Artist Project

# FUSE MAGAZINE

CENTRE DE DOCUMENTATION  
ARTEXTE  
DOCUMENTATION CENTRE

Volume 30 Number 3 July 2007

### Board of Directors

Adrian Blackwell, Roberta Buiani, Firoza Elavia,  
Tony Hewer, Tomas Jonsson, Robinder Sehdev,  
Jessica Shepherd, Swintak, Syrus Marcus Ware

### Editorial Committee

Adrian Blackwell, Rachel Gorman, Gita Hashemi,  
Sally McKay, Jessica Wyman

### Staff

Izida Zorde (editor)  
Heather Saunders (publisher)  
Suzanne Noga (design)  
Liz Clayton (copy editor)

### Contributing Editors

Joane Cardinal-Schubert (Calgary), Cliff Eylan  
(Winnipeg), Andrea Fatona (Peterborough),  
Richard Fung (Toronto), Ashok Mathur  
(Vancouver/Kamloops), Clive Robertson  
(Kingston), Nell Tenhaaf (Toronto), Sharon  
Rosenberg (Edmonton), Kirsten Forkert (New  
York), tobias c. van veen (Montreal), Joseph  
Rosen (Montreal), Trish Salah (Montreal) R  
William Hill (London UK), Dot Tuer (Toronto and  
Argentina), Randy Lee Cutler (Vancouver), Janna  
Graham (London UK), Michelle Jacques (Toronto)

### Errata

In issue 30:2, we neglected to extend our thanks  
to Camera for their assistance with the launch of  
issue 30:1.

In issue 30:2, the middle photo on page 32 was  
incorrectly referred to as the Emily Carr Institute  
of Art + Design, rather than the Nova Scotia  
College of Art and Design University.

We apologize for these oversights.

Cover image: (Detail) Clive Robertson,  
*ART KILLS ME* (1975) plexiglass tank.  
(12 x 18 x 2 1/2 in. Vinyl ink, acrylic  
sheet, mineral oil).  
Photo: Marcella Bienvenue.  
Courtesy: Voicespendence Archives.

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](mailto:subscriptions@fusemagazine.org)  
tel: (416) 340-8026

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

Copyright © 2007 Artons Publishing Inc. All rights reserved under  
International Copyright Union. Any reproduction without permission is  
prohibited. Send permission requests to Access Copyright (1 800 893 5777).  
Artons Publishing purchases First North American Serial Rights and copyright  
reverts to the writer after publication. Artons Publishing assumes no  
responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts. Manuscripts will not be returned.  
A copy of our Writers' Guidelines is available on our website. Publication of  
an advertisement in FUSE does not include endorsement of the advertiser by  
the magazine. Opinions expressed outside of specifically marked editorials  
are not necessarily held by members of the Editorial Board.

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

## Alternatives to the current order

In her forthcoming book on the possibilities for repoliticizing visual arts and culture, Marina Grzanic argues that the arts play an integral role in both normalizing dominant economic and cultural systems and critiquing and presenting alternatives to them. Examining the role of art, especially as it is positioned and framed by major institutions, large-scale art events and government funding structures, she points to the necessity of attending to the ways in which art and artists are positioned in relation to the larger economic and social shifts that happen under globalization and neo-liberal capitalism. She writes, "The power to change the neo-liberal capitalist system consists in building new cultural and social infrastructures, of self-sustaining and self-organizing micro-systems and political thinking."

The transformative power of artistic and cultural production is a central theme of this issue. For Clive Robertson — one of the founders of Fuse and a long-time organizer in the artist-run culture movement — this year marks an important culminating moment with the publication of his book *Policy Matters* and his retrospective exhibition *Then + Then Again*.

In conversation with Vera Frenkel, Robertson considers the production of critical discourse through the interconnectedness of artist-run centres and publishing, the combination of production and commission with display and publication and the history of establishing rights

for artists. Robertson states, "my conception of an 'artist-run centre' was and remains that it is a hybrid form that had work to do that was more ambitious than simply providing a display space run by artists." The history that Robertson documents in his retrospective exhibition, is in many ways also the history of Fuse and the broader artist-run culture movement.

In *The Anxiety of "Reality-Based Community,"* Kirsten Forkert considers the state of politically engaged art practices as a context for a discussion of *Who Cares* — a recently released publication of a series of dinner discussions amongst artist about the possibilities of political art production. Critical of the soul-searching that leads many conversations in *Who Cares* to the idea that the left has focused for too long on the tools of literacy and analysis, Forkert argues that as politically engaged artists we need to have a plan for challenging the notion that traditions of critique have become ineffective. Forkert insists on breaking the taboo of non-instrumentality, indeed having discussions of political possibilities as working meetings where voices with less visibility and institutional sanctioning are present.

In our second column, Rachel Gorman examines the struggle over disability arts, demonstrating fundamental tensions over representation between charitable organizations and artist led initiatives, implicating systems of funding and arguing for the necessity of repoliticizing disability arts and culture spaces and providing necessary technical training for and invest-

ment in artists who identify as disabled. The struggle for meager resources and spaces is addressed in Brenda Goldstein's shortFuse titled *Not So Far From Home*, in which she problematizes the recent Goethe Institut decision to divest itself of its gallery, library and theatre. According to Goldstein, the divestiture of this important site for exhibition and research reflects the increasing role that market forces play in both determining the value of culture and shrinking the pool of venues. Pointing to the responsibility of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Canadian Heritage for closures such as these, she encourages them to consider resigning.

Under the contemporary regimes of global capital and their attendant political controls, the cultural response can oscillate between non-engagement and resignation, with the variations on these positions being all too ubiquitous to catalogue. For some, calling on artistic production to challenge the status quo is nothing more than an idealistic, if not romantic provocation, an all-too-easy statement positioned outside of the realities of the art world and its Faustian demands. For others, and we hope, for many reading this issue, the provocation for a more engaged and politically-conscious artistic production has its correlate in emerging and existent artistic practices that see alternatives to the current order as the only reality worth pursuing.

Izida Zorde

Re: Cutting Out Collage: CARFAC and the License to do Business

Dear FUSE,

The recent article, *Cutting Out Collage* was an interesting piece of work, cutting and pasting pieces of fact and fiction to construct a lopsided picture. CARFAC would never presume to tell artists what they can and cannot do. What we are obliged to do is advise artists about the risks of their practices, from not signing a contract, breathing toxic fumes or appropriating material. In this regard we advise that they reduce their exposure to harm.

Currently, the risk to artists who appropriate material for their work is unclear, given the way the law is written in terms of Fair Dealing. The problem here is the lack of case law in Canada. Without a court

ruling, the law is not tested and it is hard to know where you stand. Admittedly this is not a comfortable position to be in. Collage does not have this same burden of uncertainty because of its pervasiveness and history as "normal practices of the industry," which is allowed for in current law.

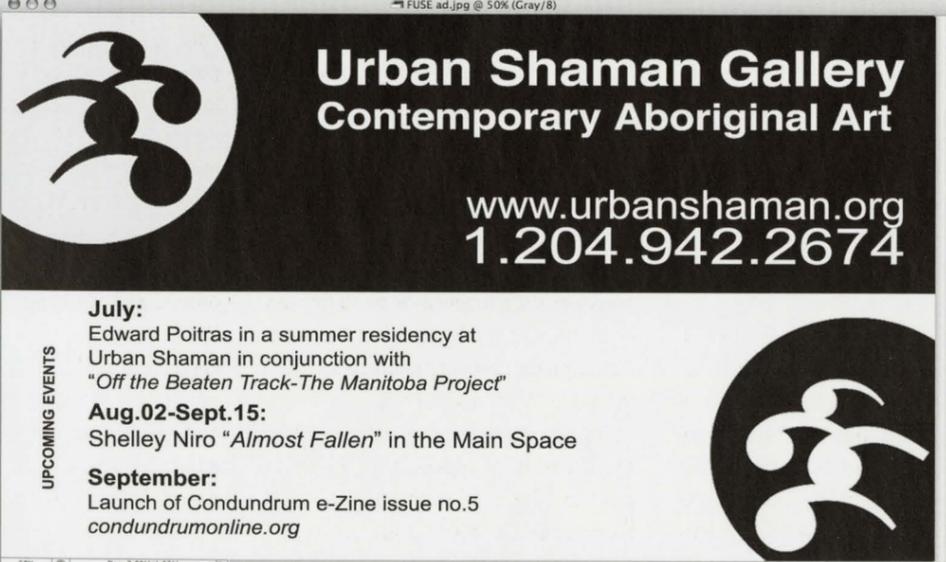
What is clear is that there is great pressure to reform Canada's copyright laws. CARFAC has a long and successful history of using the Copyright Act to earn significant benefits for artists in terms of rights and remuneration. Copyright has always been a delicate balance between the rights of owners and those of users. To ensure that this balance serves the needs of artists, CARFAC is looking closely at developments in Britain and Australia, which are proposing increased exceptions in the Fair Dealing provisions of their respective laws,

increasing access for copyright users. Before we advocate for any change we want to make sure they're the right changes.

RAAV has no desire in creating a cultural climate of winners and losers, through copyright reform or any other policy. We also believe that art making isn't an act of charity. The rights that artists have today have been hard won and still have to be defended. We hear too many horror stories from the casualties. Improving the working conditions for all visual and media artists is the only crusade in which we're interested.

Respectfully,

Gerald Beaulieu  
President, RAAV National  
Yves Louis-Seize  
Président, RAAV



FUSE ad.jpg @ 50% (Gray/8)

**Urban Shaman Gallery**  
Contemporary Aboriginal Art

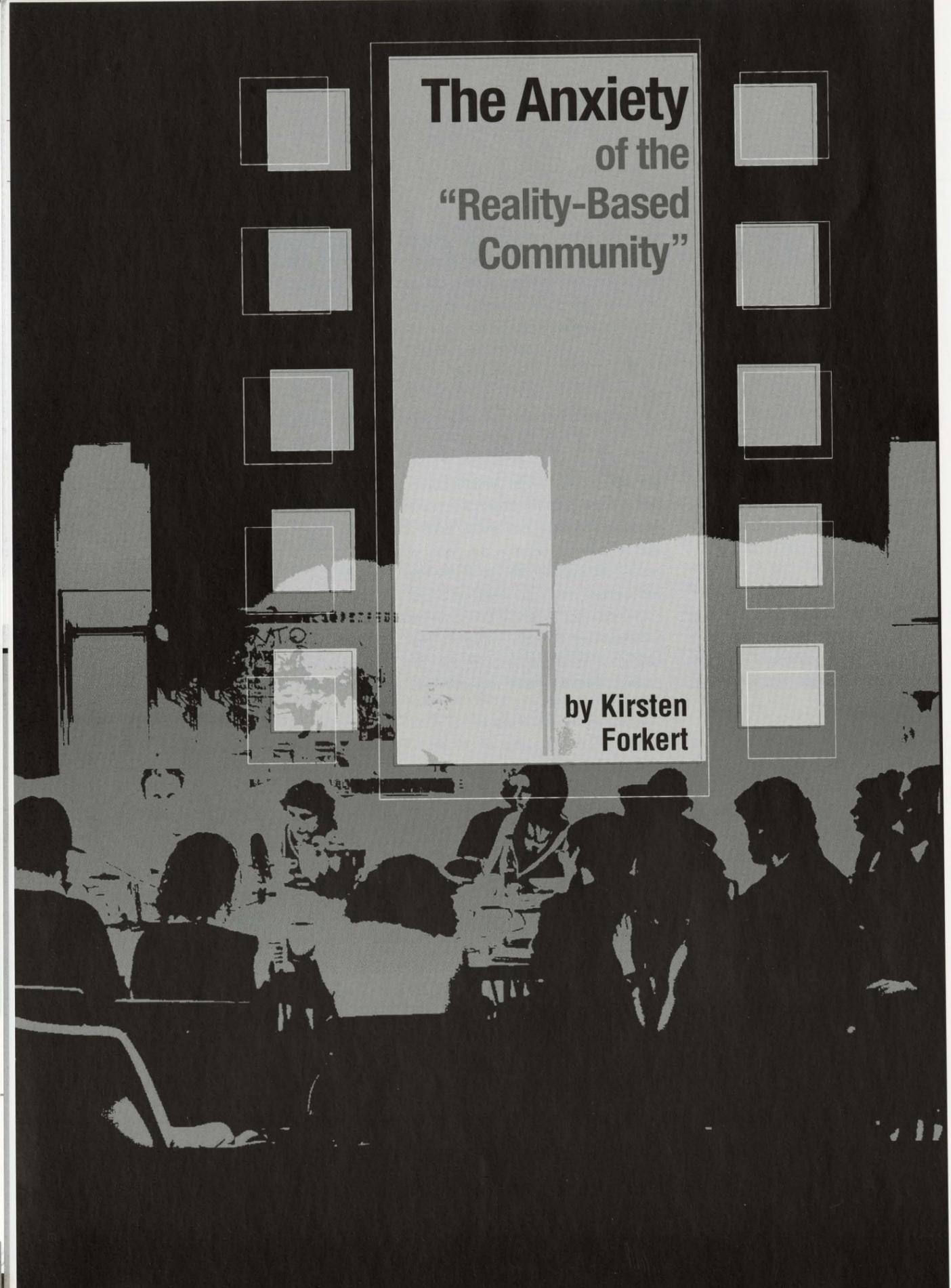
www.urbanshaman.org  
1.204.942.2674

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

**July:**  
Edward Poitras in a summer residency at Urban Shaman in conjunction with "Off the Beaten Track-The Manitoba Project"

**Aug.02-Sept.15:**  
Shelley Niro "Almost Fallen" in the Main Space

**September:**  
Launch of Condundrum e-Zine issue no.5  
condundrumonline.org



## The Anxiety of the “Reality-Based Community”

by Kirsten  
Forkert

There has been a great deal of discussion in the arts over the past few years about whether we have seen a noticeable decline in politically engaged art practices since 9/11 (particularly in the us), as well as how to combat a general feeling of malaise and apathy on the left. These discussions often raise the question of whether declining state support for critical, controversial and experimental art practices, combined with the expansion of the art market and increasing corporate sponsorship of the arts, may be influencing the function of culture and the possible forms it can take. Combined with a wider sense of political disempowerment, does this create a situation that is particularly difficult for politically engaged artists to survive and continue making work in?

In 2006, Creative Time, a public art commissioning organization in New York, published *Who Cares*. The book consists of transcripts from a series of three dinner party/discussions that took place in November 2005, organized by Anne Pasternak, curator and artistic director of Creative Time and Doug Ashford, an artist, writer, former member of the artists' collective Group Material and professor at Cooper Union. The dinner/discussions were organized out of concern for what the organizers perceived as a “noticeable decline in ‘politically-engaged’ art over the recent years.”<sup>1</sup> Feeling that the threats to civil liberties from antiterrorist legislation and an overall conservative climate were causing artists to self-censor, the discussions were

intended to find a way for artists to reflect on the situation and to strategize on how to respond, in a “safe space.”<sup>2</sup> Each dinner/discussion had a theme: 1) Anywhere in the World, 2) Beauty and Its Discontents and 3) War Culture.

Thirty-seven people were invited to the dinners, a selection that Pasternak describes as a “list of dream attendees (artists along with a few esteemed writers).”<sup>3</sup> Ashford states in his introduction that although he told the original participants that he wanted the discussions to be working meetings, the “central reverberating image”<sup>4</sup> was not work at all but play, which he connects to Charles Fourier’s concept of “conviviality” and Friedrich Schiller’s “play instinct.”<sup>5</sup>

Another term he uses is “temporary space of mutuality.”<sup>6</sup> He argues that these conversations were to take place without an outside audience so people could speak freely, associating publicness with the external demands of state and corporate funders.

This emphasis on privacy and non-instrumentality is what allows certain very candid and spontaneous discussions to take place. It is also the source of one of the major problems in the book. Ashford connects both privacy and non-utilitarian conversation to feminist and queer social practices for their redefinition and politicization of the relationship between public and private. However, privacy can also be exclusive; this emphasis, combined with a

selection criteria that seemed mainly based on visibility within the visual art field, often left one wondering why certain voices were included, and why others were left out, particularly those from New York's activist community who, while having significant experience in dealing with these issues, may not have enough symbolic capital or institutional affiliations within the arts to be visible to the organizers. Some are mentioned in side references (seated at the kids' table, so to speak). The emphasis on non-instrumentality keeps discussions to a very general level, so my impression is often of experiencing conversations that I have heard before. Freed from the task of having to develop a program or plan, many of the discussions seem to default into a familiar pessimism and hopelessness.

This valuing of the private and non-instrumental reveals both longstanding and recent historical baggage of the art discipline — which is also why this problem is not limited to *Who Cares*. In a larger sense, ideas of artistic practice as a non-instrumental activity, free from the pressures of the market and the world of work, have been with us since 18th Century Romanticism (perhaps it is no coincidence that Ashford mentions Schiller). Ashford seems to be trying to revisit this tradition, but I will return to this later. Specific to the history of organizing discussions for

artists, a more immediate precedent might be relational aesthetics, which has emphasized conviviality and the creation of platforms for open-ended discussion (perhaps with Habermas' ideal of communicative action) — but retained the art field's prohibitions against 'didacticism,' clear political goals and intentions.

*Who Cares* provides a fascinating snapshot of how a group of artists speak about politics in the present moment: the arguments that are made, the metaphors and examples that are used, as well as the impasses and frustrations. Many issues are specific to an American, and more particularly a New York context (especially following the 2004 Republican Convention in New York, and then the Republican victory), others have wider implications in terms of how artists respond to neoliberalism and neoconservatism. One recurring theme is intergenerational tension (the sense that present generations not only have less access to spaces and resources than previous generations, but also are more politically conservative). Another recurring theme is the soul-searching endemic to the Left — unfortunately, a process often marked by a paralyzing anxiety. This anxiety is connected to a self-perception, particularly in the US and especially in New York, as a besieged, educated, privileged and isolated metropol-

itan population, now increasingly marginalized and out of touch in the face of rising right-wing Christian fundamentalism, the destruction of the welfare state and a government that does not obey the rule of law, never mind common sense.

Another aspect of this soul-searching is the sense that the Left has for too long focused on the tools of analysis, media literacy and providing information and if it is to be as successful as the Right (especially the religious Right) must now focus on affect. According to this logic, the Left, which has traditionally associated itself with critique and the dispelling of illusions — must learn to reappropriate affirmation if we are going to win anything — or at the very least mobilize people.

In his introduction, Ashford describes two paintings by Jean-Antoine Watteau called *The Pilgrimage to Cythera* (1717) and *Embarkation for Cythera* (1719), both within the tradition of "fête galante" depicting two lovers on an excursion through a pastoral landscape, engaged in conversation. Ashford interprets the paintings as revealing a tension between the "drive towards pleasure and the social necessity of politics."<sup>7</sup> Although Ashford cautions that the paintings are "painfully elitist,"<sup>8</sup> he argues for including them within a tradition of radical political art,

which would also include the work of Louise Lawler, Archigram, James Brown and the Guerrilla Art Action Group. I see this naming of the paintings as radical political practice as an attempt to question a kind of orthodoxy that (to grossly simplify) would loosely associate conceptual art, left politics and critical analysis — and then painting, the market, conservative politics, religion and affect. While any kind of orthodoxy that would instantly dismiss certain art practices is problematic, after looking at the Watteau paintings (which depict happy aristocrats frolicking in an idyllic landscape), I see this as an argument for the political significance of high culture as conventionally defined (signaled by Ashford's references to Schiller) perhaps in reaction to those intellectual traditions that have critiqued this position, including cultural studies, feminism and postcolonial theory.

Peter Eeley, Chitra Ganesh, Hans Haacke, Lucy Lippard, Anne Pasternak, Patricia C. Phillips, Martha Rosler and David Levi Strauss.

"Anywhere in the World" begins with a description of the experience of Otto Gillen, one of Ashford's students at Cooper Union. Gillen was stopped by security guards when taking photos of Federal Plaza in New York and forced to remove the film from his camera. This led to a class project of making cardboard cameras (without film) and taking them to Federal Plaza to see how the security system responded. The discussion centres on the question of whether one defines one's art practice and political activities as connected or separate. There is also a re-evaluation of previous activist strategies (whether mass protests change anything). Martha Rosler argues that when she was protesting the Vietnam War, older generations of activists told her that street protests were an obsolete and useless activity and that her experience since has proven them wrong. Others, such as Tania Bruguera, argue that activists are using outdated strategies and should "catch up with new technology,"<sup>9</sup> but without referring to any specific examples of technology as an activist tool. A few examples are mainly brought up by the Yes Men, but largely remain within an art context, with little discussion of online independent media and Internet activism. The conversation turns then to the importance of discursive spaces and organizational support for critical art projects — how institutional support provides much needed resources, but also acts as a containing force, hindering the political potential of these practices. This is a recurrent theme in the other two discussions as well.

**My impression is often of experiencing conversations that I have heard before. Freed from the task of having to develop a program or plan, many of the discussions seem to default into a familiar pessimism and hopelessness.**

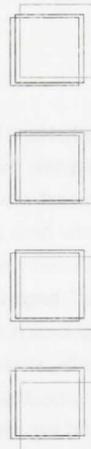
## Anywhere in the World

Andy Bichlbaum Mike Bonanno Tania Bruguera Mel Chin Dean Daderko Peter Eeley  
Chitra Ganesh Hans Haacke Lucy Lippard Anne Pasternak Patricia C. Phillips  
Doug Ashford Martha Rosler David Levi Strauss

### Where are we now?

The first discussion in *Who Cares*, entitled "Anywhere in the World," includes Doug Ashford as moderator, Andy Bichlbaum and Mike Bonanno from The Yes Men, Tania Bruguera, Mel Chin, Dean Daderko,

Julie Ault  
 Paul Chan  
 Peter Eleey  
 Coco Fusco  
 Byron Kim  
 Marlene McCarty  
 Anne Pasternak  
 Heather Peterson  
 Paul Pfeiffer  
 Michael Rakowitz  
 Amy Sillman  
 Alison Smith  
 Kiki Smith



## Beauty and its Discontents

### Critique and its Discontents

The second discussion is called "Beauty and its Discontents." The participants include Julie Ault, Paul Chan, Peter Eleey, Coco Fusco, Byron Kim, Marlene McCarty, Anne Pasternak, Heather Peterson, Paul Pfeiffer, Michael Rakowitz, Amy Sillman, Alison Smith and Kiki Smith. This heated discussion engages how socially based forms of criticism are taken for denigrations of beauty, especially in relation to the reactionary ideologies of the mid-1990s that were associated with beauty (such as Dave Hickey)<sup>10</sup> and the effects of a strong art market on both the definition of beauty and of socially engaged practice. Coco Fusco makes the comment that while the art market was quite active during the 1980s, so was socially engaged art. Using the phrase "Artforum is our Pravda,"<sup>11</sup> Fusco argues that one of the problems today is a narrower range of art publications than in the 1960s, 1970s or early 1980s, especially those presenting a variety of political perspectives. This points to some conspicuous omissions: in this case

of web-based publications, fanzines and small press publications that do in fact take a much more politicized view than *Artforum* and certainly contain much less advertising: *AREA*, *Chto Delat*, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Protest*, *The Journal for Northeast Issues* and *MUTE* to name a few.

Generational difference frames the rest of the conversation, as there seem to be roughly two generations of artists present: Ashford, Fusco, Sillman and others artists who became active in the 1980s, and then Rakowitz, Chan, Alison Smith and others who became active in the late 1990s. The underlying consensus seems to be that the situation is much more difficult for younger generations, but also that younger generations are conservative and apathetic. This is reflected in Fusco's comment about the reluctance of younger women to be feminists, arguing that "what the feminist movement has essentially done is pushed the glass ceiling back so that they don't really feel the effects of gender and equity until they are thirty-five."<sup>12</sup> The discussion then turns to art education where Fusco makes an interesting point that her students are afraid of making socially engaged art because they feel it is "exploitative:"

**students feel that post-studio and socially engaged practices are problematic because they cross traditional disciplinary boundaries and negotiate complex ethical issues, while traditional studio practices are assumed to be safer, as expressions of the artist's individual subjectivity.**

"They believe that if you dare to think of something other than your private space, other than your little room, you run the risk of exploiting somebody. You're exploiting the people you're working with, you're exploiting the poor people you photograph, you're exploiting the social issue that you're dealing with ... and so that becomes their moralistic high ground on which to basically retreat back into the studio."<sup>13</sup>

Fusco's comment reveals an impasse within art education, perhaps reflecting a lack of acceptance and discourse around socially engaged practices. The result of this is that students feel that post-studio and socially engaged practices are problematic because they cross traditional disciplinary boundaries and negotiate complex ethical issues, while traditional studio practices are assumed to be safer, as expressions of the artist's individual subjectivity.

Perhaps in response to the impasse, Alison Smith then points out that critique has consisted of revealing what is wrong rather than actively working towards alternatives. "We're all comfortable talking about protest ... Wherever you are on the spectrum of art theory and critical

discourse, we all know how to criticize something ... So I disagree with Coco's earlier point about there being no space for the airing of dissent. There is a whole industry centered on criticism. Maybe what is needed now is not more critique, but a profoundly radical creativity."<sup>14</sup> While this argument is significant in challenging the pessimism expressed by Fusco and others, questions also need to be asked about whether this approach indicates a post-critical stance — further contributing to the suppression of dissent.

Towards the end of the discussion, Julie Ault registers her discomfort in participating because of its general, unfocused nature. She says, "... we shoot out a few things and they become the basis for codifying a public culture that doesn't necessarily emerge from considered desire or need or process. This is the reason for my silence here tonight. I have trouble relating to the general, latent agenda of this conversation ... But to talk about [the generalized crisis we find ourselves in] over dinner ... doesn't seem to work, and isn't personally productive."<sup>15</sup> I would also argue that in the absence of a specific goal, the debate too easily becomes about the prestige of those who participate in it.

### Creating an antiwar culture

The third conversation, "War Culture," again involves Doug Ashford as moderator and includes Gregg Bordowitz, Paul Chan, Peter Eleey, Deborah Grant, K8 Hardy, Sharon Hayes, Emily Jacir, Ronak Kapadia, Steve Kurtz, Julia LaVerdiere, John Menick, Helen Molesworth, Anne Pasternak, Ben Rodriguez-Cubeñas, Ralph Rugoff and Nato Thompson.

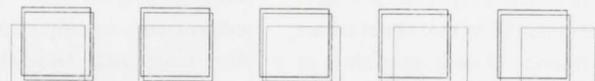
Gregg Bordowitz begins the discussion by arguing that we not only need better strategies, but a different counterculture — and that this is not only a question of giving people more information, but also "fighting the battle on the level of mood."<sup>16</sup> In other words, we cannot change the situation without changing the collective mood of depression and fear, in addition to changing material conditions (of course which comes first is another question). He continues to assert this throughout the discussion — that artists, activists and more generally the Left need to recognize the importance of affect, and, echoing Alison Smith's statement in the previous conversation, that the Left needs to reclaim the affirmative: "You can't just be anti-war. You

have to be for a set of positive principles and ideals and it is very difficult at this moment to be for something."<sup>17</sup> Later on, Bordowitz argues that "I just want to say yes to everything,"<sup>18</sup> and that the organizational structure of ACT-UP, of which he was a founding member, involved supporting any of the activities initiated by individual members.

Bordowitz's provocations to say yes to everything and consider the importance of collective mood and the affirmative, however, do not work in this particular discussion. Helen Molesworth questions Bordowitz's position as romantic. She states, "I feel that what is happening around the table and one of the things that's in this room, is a profound sense of failure. The affect in this room is one of failure." Paul Chan then takes this up and states that the failure reflects the acknowledgment that the Left has failed to recognize religion as a viable counterculture, much to our detriment and marginalization. He continues to make this point throughout the discussion (and also raises it in "Beauty and its Discontents"), challenging the orthodoxy that would equate the Left with secularism.

## War Culture

Gregg Bordowitz Paul Chan Peter Eleey Deborah Grant K8 Hardy Sharon Hayes Emily Jacir Ronak Kapadia Steve Kurtz Julia LaVerdiere John Menick Helen Molesworth Anne Pasternak Ben Rodriguez-Cubeñas Ralph Rugoff Nato Thompson



Interestingly, the most genuinely optimistic person in the room (rather than calling for optimism as a theoretical or political position) is Steve Kurtz of Critical Art Ensemble. Kurtz says that he doesn't "have the option of talking about failure and the triumph of neoconservatism or fascism. If I do, I may as well lock myself in a jail cell, which I'm not going to do."<sup>19</sup> Kurtz also states that now we have the benefit of knowledge from past activist strategies, mentioning The Black Panthers, the Guerrilla Art Action Group and the Yippies. He then makes a very interesting statement: "The greatest lie that we can ever internalize from authoritarian culture is that we are helpless to do anything."<sup>20</sup> Kurtz' statement begs the question of whether participants in the conversation are pessimistic because they can afford to be, freed from the sense of urgency of confronting authoritarian culture as Kurtz is with his pending trial.

### Affirmation and Affect

I would like to return now to the point that was continually made throughout the *Who Cares* discussion, that the Left must reappropriate the affirmative and affect from the Right to ask whether this is a response to an overall sense that traditions of critique, both within art and within politics, have largely become ineffective. I am speculating that Fusco's statement about students returning to traditional studio practices for fear of "exploiting others" might be one aspect of this — in terms of how interpretations of identity politics can lead us to a place where we can only speak for ourselves as individuals. I would also argue that the institutionalization of traditions of institutional critique might be another — whereby practices that reveal structural inequities are being commissioned by institutions — making it more difficult to create any kind of real change. Yet another aspect might be how artist-run centres and other independent spaces can

feed rather than challenge institutional and commercial pressures on art practice. In a more structural sense, it may also reflect the impasse of, on the one hand, acknowledging the longstanding systemic problems with art institutions, and on the other, recognizing one's own dependency on them (especially for one's livelihood). The danger of this point of view, of course, is that it creates a kind of totalizing logic whereby we are unable to see anything other than those institutions (exemplified by Fusco's statement that "Artforum is our Pravda"). Within politics, the impasse seems to result from a widespread sense of disempowerment — where we might have an accurate political analysis and enough grasp of the facts to understand our situation, but changing it is much more difficult. Perhaps the most valid in these calls for the affirmative is the point that if you are going to ask people to take risks and make sacrifices, there has to be the promise of something better. But in appealing to the affirmative, how do we avoid internal repressions of dissent or critique as "not being positive enough" or "killing the mood?" How do we distinguish a radical form of affirmation from the conservative pressures Ashford outlines in his introduction, as "be positive, encourage participation and keep the faith?"<sup>21</sup>

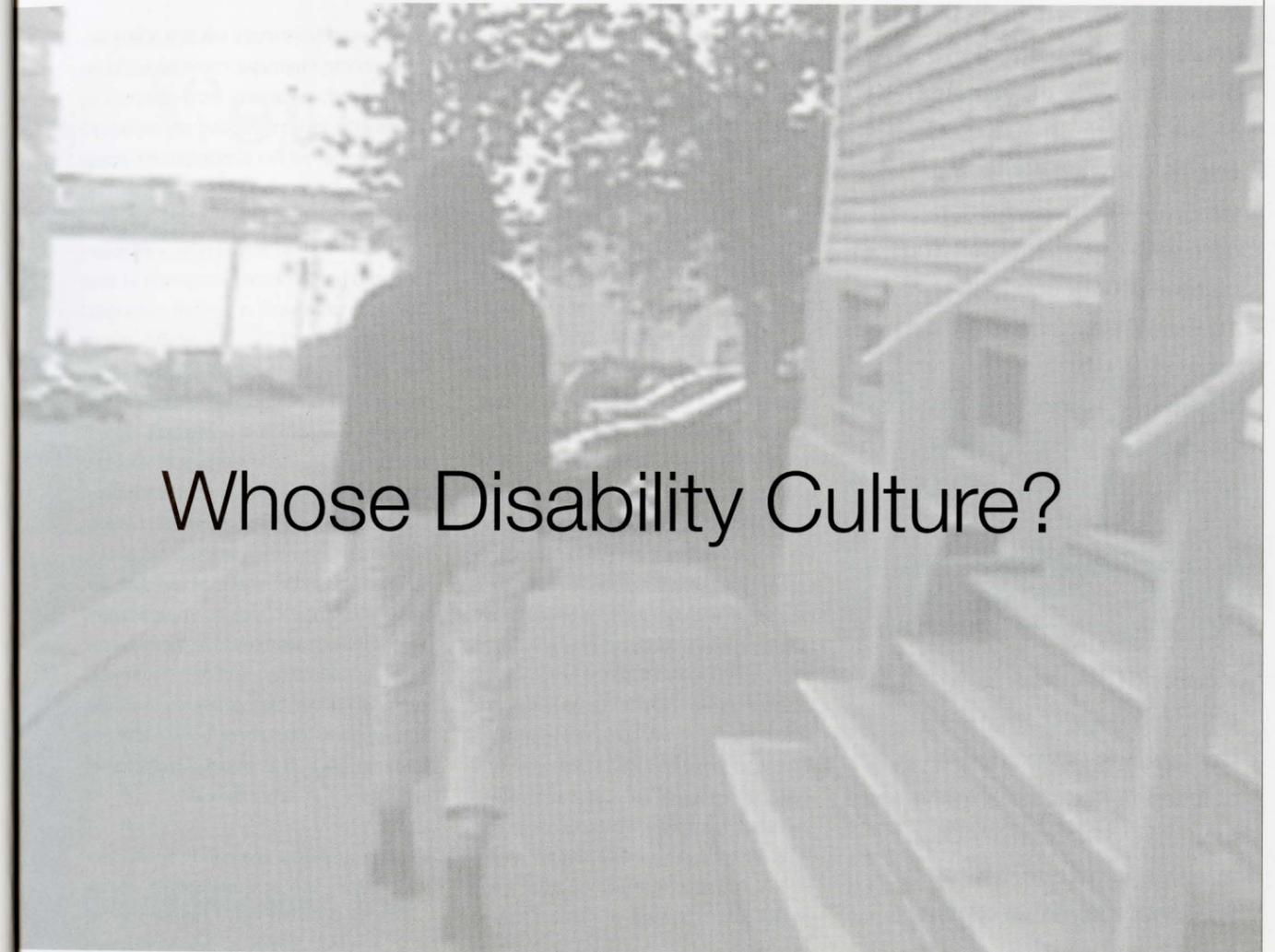
In the end, how productive is it to rhetorically argue for affect and then to claim that certain art spaces and collectives fulfill this role without much discussion about how this actually happens, especially for those who have not participated in these activities? This then becomes the problem of the "privacy" of these conversations: the exclusivity, the tendency to focus on a few isolated examples without a discussion of a wider context that includes lesser-known arts collectives and activist initiatives, including Reclaim The Streets parties, Critical Mass bike rides, radical knitters' groups, etc. that continue

to work on the level of collective affect, at least amongst participants. Perhaps this again reflects the problems of omission, but also the general nature of the discussion that allows for these strategies to remain unevaluated in their effectiveness (defining effectiveness in a broad and generous sense), in terms of how they create a collective mood, while *also* avoiding the internal suppression of dissent. I would argue that to discuss these specifics means breaking the disciplinary taboo of non-instrumentality, and actually, as Ashford called for in the original invitation letters, having a real working meeting. It also might mean taking a few risks, one of them being the inclusion of voices that might have less visibility or institutional sanctioning within an arts context, but who could contribute some important and less familiar perspectives.

*Kirsten Forkert is a Canadian cultural producer currently based in Malmö, Sweden. She is currently researching the role of artists in social movements, including an online sound project for The Journal of Aesthetics and Protest and an ongoing collaboration with Copenhagen artist Kristina Ask on self-organizing and feminism. Kirsten's writing on tactical media will be published in an upcoming issue of Third Text. She has recently become involved in the CA Radical Art Caucus.*

#### Notes:

1. Doug Ashford and Anne Pasternak, eds. *Who Cares*. (New York: Creative Time Books, 2006), p.9.
2. *Ibid*, p.9.
3. *Ibid*, p.11.
4. *Ibid*, p.18.
5. *Ibid*, p.18.
6. *Ibid*, p.19.
7. *Ibid*, p.16.
8. *Ibid*, p.16.
9. *Ibid*, p.28.
10. See Dave Hickey. *Air Guitar: Essays on Art And Democracy*. (Art Issues Press, 1997). Also Dave Hickey. *The Invisible Dragon: Four Essays on Beauty*. (Art Issues Press, 1994).
11. Ashford and Pasternak, 2006, p.64.
12. *Who Cares*, p.71.
13. *Ibid*, p.84.
14. *Ibid*, p.85.
15. *Ibid*, p.92.
16. *Ibid*, p.102.
17. *Ibid*, p.110.
18. *Ibid*, p.128.
19. *Ibid*, p.122.
20. *Ibid*, p.123.
21. *Ibid*, p.19.



## Whose Disability Culture?

Eliza Chandler, *Walk*, 2005, video still. Courtesy: the artist.

### Why we need an artist-led critical disability arts network

by Rachel Gorman

The disability arts and culture movement grew out of the disability rights movements of the 1970s and 1980s. Its origins coincide with a more general shift toward a concern with representation and cultural production in the 1990s. While in the UK, greater possibilities for community-based arts initiatives, as well as a vocal and highly organized disability rights movement with greater access to arts higher education has given rise to a radical community of independent artists and artist-led organizations, in Canada, the emerging disability arts and culture movement has continuously been threatened by arts institutions and charitable organizations that seek to promote disability arts while dismissing its political base.

"Disability culture" only emerged as an organizing concept in Canada in the past seven years. In 2000, Ryerson University launched its first disability culture event, "An Evening of Deaf and Disability Culture," as part of its fledgling disability studies program. In 2001, Geoff Church of the Society for Disability Arts and Culture (S4DAC) organized the first "Kick-START Festival" in Vancouver. "Stages," the first disability arts festival in Calgary took place in 2002 (now

## Whose Disability Culture?

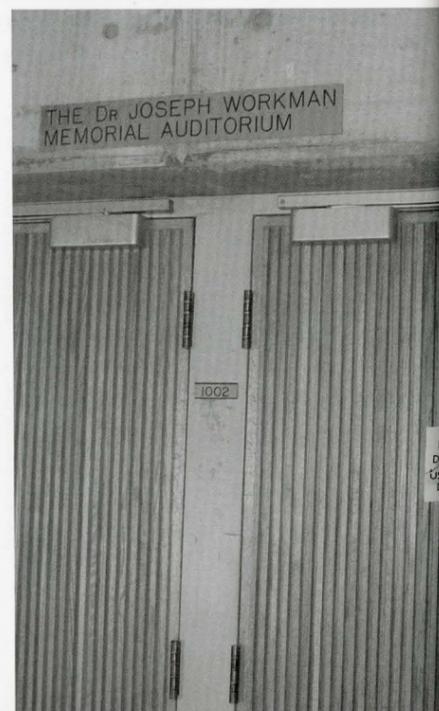
called "Balancing Acts," it is an annual festival produced by Stage Left Productions). The Canadian Disability Studies Association convened for the first time in June 2004; while Spirit Synott, a professional dancer who uses a wheelchair, was on the cover of the Canadian dance magazine, *The Dance Current* that year.<sup>1</sup> In 2006, Bonnie Klein weighed in with her NFB-funded documentary "Shameless: The Art of Disability."

When in 2006, Michele Decottignies, the artistic director for Stage Left Productions in Calgary, announced that she had received funding to start a national Disability Arts and Culture Network, many artists were excited about the possibility of a network that could develop disability culture and promote disabled artists. Funding from Canadian Heritage would allow Decottignies to gather disability arts festival organizers to discuss the challenges of sustaining and developing audiences for the different festivals. This would be the first time that disability arts presenters would meet to discuss the future of disability arts in Canada. People from six organizations were called to the table: Balancing Acts; Ryerson's Art with Attitude; Kick-START; S4DAC (the organization that runs Kick-START); Madness and the Arts; and the Abilities Festival in Toronto. Four out of the six organizations are run by disabled artists/activists with strong ties to the disability rights movement.

Workman Theatre at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health on Queen Street West in Toronto.  
Photo: Aaron Cain.

The first national Disability Arts and Culture Network meeting was held in Calgary in March 2006, and it was closed to all except representatives of the six organizations mentioned above, excluding independent artists from the conversation. When the second national Network meeting was held in Toronto in February 2007, Decottignies took the opportunity to consult with artists outside the Network meetings. Decottignies planned an open meeting for disabled artists to be held in Toronto at the Workman Theatre on February 21st, and asked Toronto-area presenters to send out the call.

Some last-minute scrambling in the two days before the meeting served as an



indication that the alienation between presenters and artists was more pronounced in Toronto than it was in the Western Canadian context where Decottignies is based. The e-poster, a call for "artists with a disability to provide feedback about a national arts initiative," was sent to arts presenters, who sent it to their respective boards, committee members and close collaborators, but not to their wider lists. As a result, almost none of the independent critical disability artists working in the Toronto area were contacted. When a friend heard about it and told me, we activated an ad hoc phone tree to get as many independent and emerging disabled artists to attend the meeting as possible.

In her presentation to the group, Decottignies described the funding and political context of the Network, explaining that Canadian Heritage would only cover costs for disability arts presenters to meet and that at the first Network meeting, presenters had argued over whether (and

**Disaggregating the political category "disabled artist" exposes how different groupings of people are positioned in relation to art, educational, legal and medical institutions.**

which) artists should attend, reflecting a growing tension over the Network's political orientation. Having reached a stalemate, the second annual Network meeting was to proceed in Toronto with the six original organizations. Decottignies explained her intention for the open artists' meeting was to give artists a chance to raise issues that she hoped would inform the direction of the Network. Over two hours, we engaged in a lively discussion about the state of disability culture, with special attention to the experiences of professional artists. I will outline the recommendations that were put forward, but first I would like to give some context to the struggles over disability arts and culture.

### The Politics of Representation

In part, the tensions in the Network meetings that Decottignies alluded to arise from power relations around access to funding. These power relations are related to divisions between artists and presenters and contradictions between disabled-identified and non-disabled-identified presenters. But underlying these issues are more fundamental questions about the politics of representation and the possibilities for artistic interventions into these cultural relations. While the disability culture movement is an expression of the disability rights movement, the idea of disabled people doing art has also proven itself irresistible to the charitable classes. For instance, the Abilities Festival, with its list of honorary patrons that includes Bluma Appel and Heather Riesman, seeks "artists with disabilities ... whose work exemplifies excellence, creativity and innovation" for its 2007 festival.<sup>2</sup> This call situates disability arts as a display of competence — proof that disabled artists are "as good as" non-disabled ones, while at the same time obscuring the cultural and political origins of the disability arts movement.

Eliza Chandler, *Hands*, 2005, video still.  
Courtesy: the artist.



Disability as a social category is reproduced through a web of political and cultural sites that predate these current struggles between artists, arts presenters and arts funders. Disaggregating the political category "disabled artist" exposes how different groupings of people are positioned in relation to art, educational, legal and medical institutions. The three examples that follow sketch out the politics of disability culture from the specific entry points of art therapy and institutionalized/incarcerated artists; access to training for physically disabled dance and theatre artists; and how disability narratives, tropes and metaphors function for "intellectually disabled" artists engaging in visual arts practices.

### Madness and its Artworks

One of the issues on the table at the first Disability Arts and Culture Network meeting was the problem of what to do with the products of art therapy programs. When a struggle over art therapy comes up in relation to disability culture, it

is not therapy *per se* that is the problem, but the institutional practices that position disabled people as being in need of development (social, psychological, or functional) and non-disabled counsellors (sometimes in the form of art therapists and art animators) as providing rehabilitation/therapeutic services intended to address these developmental deficits. The non-consensual structure of disability services removes the possibility of self-determination and sharply narrows possibilities for self-expression.

The problem of art therapy in relation to disability arts and culture goes deeper than the question of whether or not it is appropriate to include artefacts produced in therapeutic or quasi-therapeutic contexts in public exhibitions (although I will have more to say on that topic below). I am concerned with the political implications of exhibiting work produced in a de-politicized and individualized mode at disability arts festivals that should be challenging the

very power relations through which these artefacts are being produced. I was confronted with this issue when I performed at a conference organized by the Canadian Centre on Disability Studies in Winnipeg in 2004. Looking at one of the visual art displays, I realized that the artists' names were missing, with the name of their therapeutic program there instead.

Of the six presenters who participated in the Network meetings, the Madness and the Arts group may have the highest stake in the art vs. therapy debate — especially a discussion in which therapy is understood to be part of the systemic violence committed against people with disabilities. Madness and the Arts was produced by Workman Arts, a partnership of the Workman Theatre Project and the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) where the Workman Theatre is based. Workman Arts is mandated to support people who are “receiving mental health services.”<sup>3</sup> The struggle over the role of therapy in disability arts arises from a fundamental disagreement about the basis of the cultural exclusion of disabled people — are disabled people excluded because



*Trouble with Sirens* dance company. Left to right: Perry Augustine, Paulo Raposo, Rachel Gorman, Spirit Synott. Photo: Lindsay Chipman.

we need “special help” to make it in a competitive world, or because we have been subjected to historically unfolding relations of oppression that are expressed in all of our major institutions and cultural imaginings?

### Space, Technique and Access to Training

Disability culture is in part a response to, and exists within, segregated institutional spaces, but it comes from the artist/activists, not the institutions. Disability festivals emerged as spaces to showcase these artistic and activist cultural interventions. I have struggled to understand why the same theatre piece may feel different when it is performed in a disability culture space than when it is performed in a professional theatre space. In the former context, the implied or framing purpose of the event has to do with revealing disability-focused experiences and standpoints. In the latter context, when the audience supposes itself to be able-bodied, the same piece that served to reveal a lived reality becomes an affirmation of individuality, or an embracing of peculiarity. Without very carefully constructed contextualizing devices, a

theatre piece about someone's life ends up serving the theatrical purpose of bringing a catharsis of conformity to the audience that supposes itself to be able-bodied.<sup>4</sup>

Because of the focus on physicality and embodiment, theatre and dance are particularly politicized genres for disabled artists. Dancers with physical disabilities are met with disbelief when they state their occupation and are either patronized or ignored in the professional dance community.<sup>5</sup> The entire pedagogy of dance training falls apart when a dancer with a disability enters a mainstream technique class. What the instructor may correct over and over in a non-disabled dancer, she may ignore in a dancer with a different body. A dance instructor or artistic director may assume that all the physical mannerisms of a disabled performer are related to an (unchanging) impairment, rather than to bad form or lack of technique. When asked in a radio interview how she trains as a dancer and develops as an artist, Spirit Synott emphasized the importance of working with choreographers who are willing to modify their technical training in order to challenge her to do more.<sup>6</sup>

### The Trouble with “Innocence”

When we shift to visual arts, and consider the ideologies that operate around artists deemed “intellectually disabled,” the moral imperative (or trope) also shifts — to one of “eternal innocence.” Innocence is a trope that is often projected onto “publicly” disabled people, regardless of perceptions around intellectual capacity — Canadian artist Eliza Chandler addresses the idea of being publicly disabled through videos that document how passers-by react when she dresses and presents herself in a sexual way; and British artist Alison Lapper addresses the idea of innocence in her 1999 image “Angel,” in which the artist's

## The entire pedagogy of dance training falls apart when a dancer with a disability enters a mainstream technique class.

face and winged, naked upper body hover in the top right corner of the image. But in the cultural imagination, the projection of innocence onto disabled people has expanded to include the trope of “absolute un-self consciousness” — a notion that has excited art collectors and psychiatrists alike.

I acquired a pamphlet from the curator/program director of Creative Spirit Art Centre at a public art showing and performance event she organized in 2004. The centre specializes in disability art, and the curator's mission is to promote the work of artists with disabilities by championing *art brut*. This philosophy contains implicit assumptions that certain people do not and/or cannot make conscious choices about the content of their artwork and what it represents. Therefore, while these artists would need time, space and resources with which to produce their *art brut*, they would not (according to this philosophy) require technical training to clarify and convey their

conscious analysis of the world. Implicit in this philosophy is the idea that “innocent” or “non-conscious” work will appeal to a “knowing” or “conscious” audience.

This appropriation and alienation of the artist from her work creates a non-consensual relationship between artist and audience. Analyzing disability as “unconsciousness” in the visual arts is akin to analyzing disability as “peculiarity” in the dance/theatre arts. In the former, the (implied) non-disabled art consumer can reflect on the existence of a transcendent human nature or psychic characteristics; in the latter, the art consumer can move from pity/fear to empathy and catharsis, through which the moral-physical attribute is cleansed. In both cases, the disabled artist becomes the object, not the subject of her work, and her humanity is erased and replaced with a trope, or living symbol, whose purpose is to provide guidance and healing to the non-disabled.



Eliza Chandler. *To Look Back*, 2007, video still. Courtesy: the artist.



Centre for Addiction and Mental Health on Queen Street West in Toronto. Photo: Aaron Cain.

This philosophy of disability and art, which I have come to think of as the aesthetic of absence, has a particular relationship to technique and technical training. Since the aesthetic tends towards the presentation of an imaginary innocence, there is an assumed absence of technique. The technique that the artist *does* possess is interpreted as an inherent/unconscious mode of vision rather than a conscious stylistic choice.<sup>7</sup> If we analyze the possibilities for access to technique for artists with disabilities, we quickly see that the content of visual arts training in a college art program is completely different than the content of a segregated arts program.

The failure to incorporate technique — thus giving artists tools to inform the choices they make in relation to their artworks — is not related to the capacity of the artist, but to the ideologies about the artist-as-disabled. There are examples of programs that do provide critical and technical skills training in the arts. Since 1999, Michele Decottignies of Stage Left has been producing politically and technically challenging work based in the ideas and struggles of the artists in the theatre group — many of whom have been labelled intel-

lectually disabled. Decottignies uses a forum theatre approach to develop the work, and operates a comprehensive theatre-arts training program, with ongoing skills training, and new productions in development every year.

But when arts programming is divorced from the critical disability movement, it can't help but replicate the institutionalization and segregation that sparked the disability rights movement in the first place. In 2004, the aforementioned champions of *art brut*, Creative Spirit, joined with us-based disability arts network Very Special Arts (vsa). vsa's advisory board includes an array of creative arts therapists and, according to their website, their 2004 national conference was hosted by no other than George and Laura Bush. The recasting of disability art as a therapy- and charity-based venture does not deter Canadian funding agencies — also in 2004, Creative Spirit received \$24,900 from the Ontario Trillium Foundation, to match \$24,900 from Canadian Heritage to conduct a feasibility study for a new facility, which has a projected annual operating cost of \$275,000 and projected renovation and property cost of \$4,000,000.<sup>8</sup>

Toronto-based Picasso Pro has also received Trillium funding to run workshops for people with disabilities. Yet despite that fact that the project's precursor at the Toronto Theatre Alliance had a disability advisory group of practicing artists with diplomas from OCAD and degrees in theatre, the majority of its workshops are led by non-disabled-identified artists. The choice not to hire disabled-identified artists as educators replicates the non-disabled-therapist/disabled-person-with-deficit power relation I described above. While these workshops may be a way for non-artists to get involved, this type of programming is not useful to the many trained professional artists and performers who can't get shows because of discrimination.

Of course, as professional artists, we do need access to continuing professional development. Specifically, we need more workshops organized by artist/activists, rather than by non-disabled-identified artists who want to do away with technique or who push alternative techniques as a substitute for doing the work of translating and adapting technique for the participants. We need master classes and workshops led by artists who have found

## At all costs, festivals must avoid pandering to an imagined non-disability-identified audience who will benefit from learning about diversity and tolerance.

ways to re-present various aspects of their social identity — for example California-based playwright Lynn Manning, who deals with representations of race, class, masculinity and disablement; or uk-based theatre artist Deborah A. Williams, who has launched important work on representations of race and gender in a white-dominated disability culture movement. We need master classes and workshops led by Canadian artists who can teach us about how they have adapted the techniques of their respective genres in order to address disability critically in their work — for example, Alex Bulmer in video-making,<sup>9</sup> and Alan Shaun in theatre and story-telling.

We need allies in fine arts schools and programs to bring critical discussions about representations of disability in arts and culture into the curriculum, both through the inclusion of critical disability perspectives in core courses, and through the creation of elective courses on disability arts and culture. We need basic access for students with disabilities — this in turn will necessitate a critical overhaul of how we understand and organize the training of students in fine arts techniques. We also need our allies in arts libraries and digital archiving to compile and give students access to examples of disability arts. An innovative example of accessible archiving and programming possibilities is the Stretch initiative based in the Adaptive

Technology Resource Centre at the University of Toronto.<sup>10</sup>

We need to re-politicize our disability arts and culture spaces. Disability conferences and festivals have been important spaces for the development of the critical disability movement. Disability culture events of the 1990s — where artists like Mary Duffy<sup>11</sup> and Cheryl Marie Wade first threw down their performance-art-based challenges to how disabled women's bodies are present/absent in the public sphere — have evolved into stops along the touring circuit for disabled artists. In the current Canadian context, we are operating several disability culture events each year without an independent artistic base. In the uk, radical disability artists and activists have long-established, touring theatre companies, with clearly articulated aesthetic and political mandates.<sup>12</sup> We need festivals to commission new critical and politically challenging work and organize artist calls around challenging themes. At all costs, festivals must avoid pandering to an imagined non-disability-identified audience who will benefit from learning about diversity and tolerance.

We need to support our established artists with residencies, commissions, and curatorial responsibilities. That's the way some us- and uk-based artists have been able to gain international profiles and produce and tour excellent work. We need to mentor our

young and emerging artist/activists. Disability culture events can be spaces for activists to experiment in making cultural interventions and spaces for artists to explore the politics of representation. We need, in fact, to create an *artist-led* network in order to put our lobbying, networking and presenting skills to collective use. In this way, non-disabled-identified administrators who position themselves outside the movement need not be the ones explaining and interpreting disability arts and culture to potential funders. We need our allies, especially the ones with privilege and connections to funders and donors, to lobby for the inclusion of critical disability perspectives in *mainstream* arts programming and festivals, rather than trying to direct the movement.

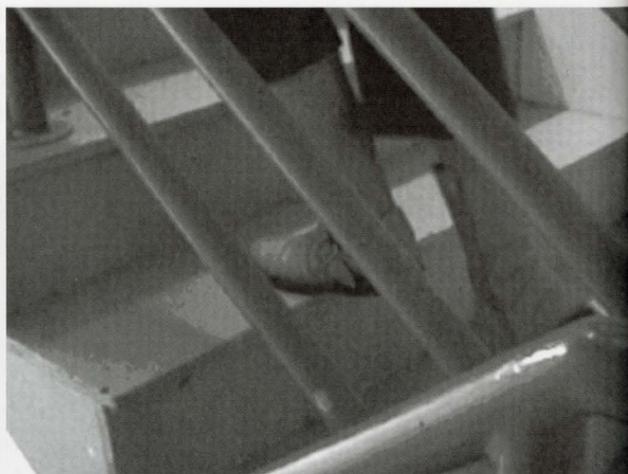
*Rachel Gorman is a movement theatre and performance artist, and has been presenting her work in theatres, parks and galleries since 1999. Rachel is a Lecturer at the Women and Gender Studies Institute of the University of Toronto, an Adjunct Professor of the Ryerson School of Disability Studies, and a member of the Canadian Alliance of Dance Artists since 2001.*

### Notes

1. Robin Miller. "Including Every Body: Mixed-Ability Dance in Canada" [cover]; "Redefining dance to include every body" [article], *The Dance Current*, 7(3), pp. 12-17 & cover.
2. See Abilities Arts Festival. <http://www.abilitiesartsfestival.org/>
3. See Workman Arts. <http://www.workmanarts.com/>
4. Here I draw on Augusta Bola's explanation of the mechanism and function of bourgeois theatre. See *Theatre of the Oppressed* (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1985).
5. When Heather Mills fell on "Dancing with the Stars", Florence Henderson commented that watching Heather fall moved her to tears, and that she wanted to run onto the stage and pick her up.
6. Ted Fox, *Evidence*, January 18, 2004, CIUT Radio FM 89.5.
7. According to popular-psychology thinking, certain sensory states produce characteristic ways of viewing and representing the world — for example, the idea that autistics have a distinct and recognizable way of visually representing the world; or the idea that Van Gogh's distinctive style was in part a product of schizophrenia.
8. See Creative Spirit Art Centre. <http://www.creativespirit.on.ca/>
9. Alex Bulmer's "Beauty" (1998) and "NOB: Services for the Blind" (2003) are available through Vtape at [www.vtape.org](http://www.vtape.org)
10. See Stretch your Creativity. <http://stretch.atrc.utoronto.ca/>
11. See Mary Duff, Artist's Profile. <http://www.maryduffy.ie/>
12. See Graeae Theatre Company, founded in 1980, at <http://www.graeae.org/> and CandoCo Dance Company, founded in 1991, at <http://www.candoco.co.uk/>



Eliza Chandler. *Catwalk: Audience Participation*, 2005, video still. Courtesy: the artist.



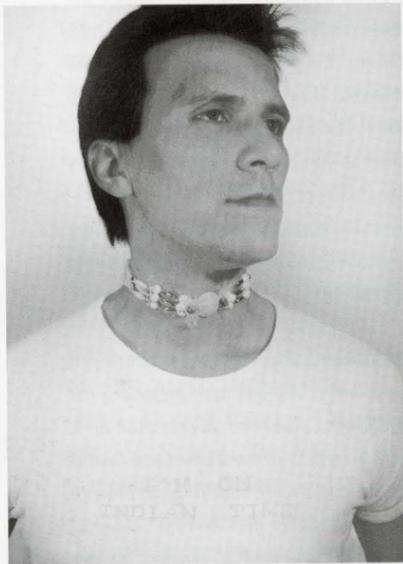
Eliza Chandler. *Steps*, 2005, video still. Courtesy: the artist.

# Cyborg Hybrid \ 'cy·borg 'hi·brid\ n

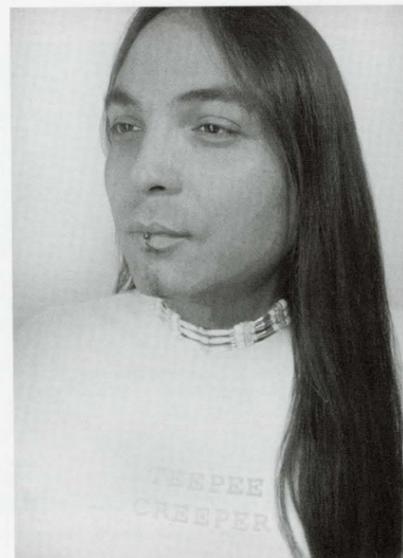
By KC Adams

Cyborg Hybrids are Euro-Aboriginal artists who are forward thinkers and plugged in with technology. They follow the doctrine of Donna Harroway's Cyborg Manifesto[1], which states that a cyborg is a creature in a technological, post-gender world free of traditional western stereotypes towards race and gender.

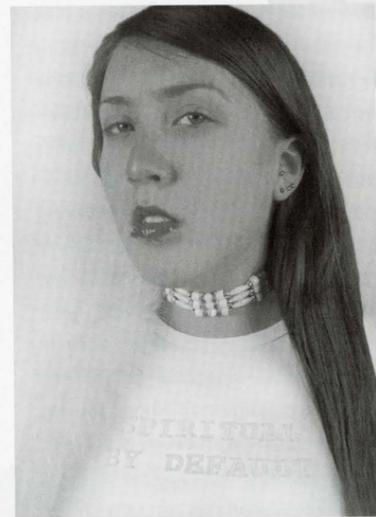
[1] <http://www.stanford.edu/dept/HPS/Haraway/CyborgManifesto.html>



Cyborg Hybrid David (multi-media artist)  
"I'M ON INDIAN TIME"



Cyborg Hybrid Scott (Photographer)  
"TEEPEE CREEPER"



Cyborg Hybrid Yvonne (Curator)  
"SPIRITUAL BY DEFAULT"



Cyborg Hybrid Jen (Film Maker)  
"ASK ME ABOUT MY SWEETGRASS"



Cyborg Hybrid Candice (Curator)  
"SCALPING IS IN MY BLOOD"

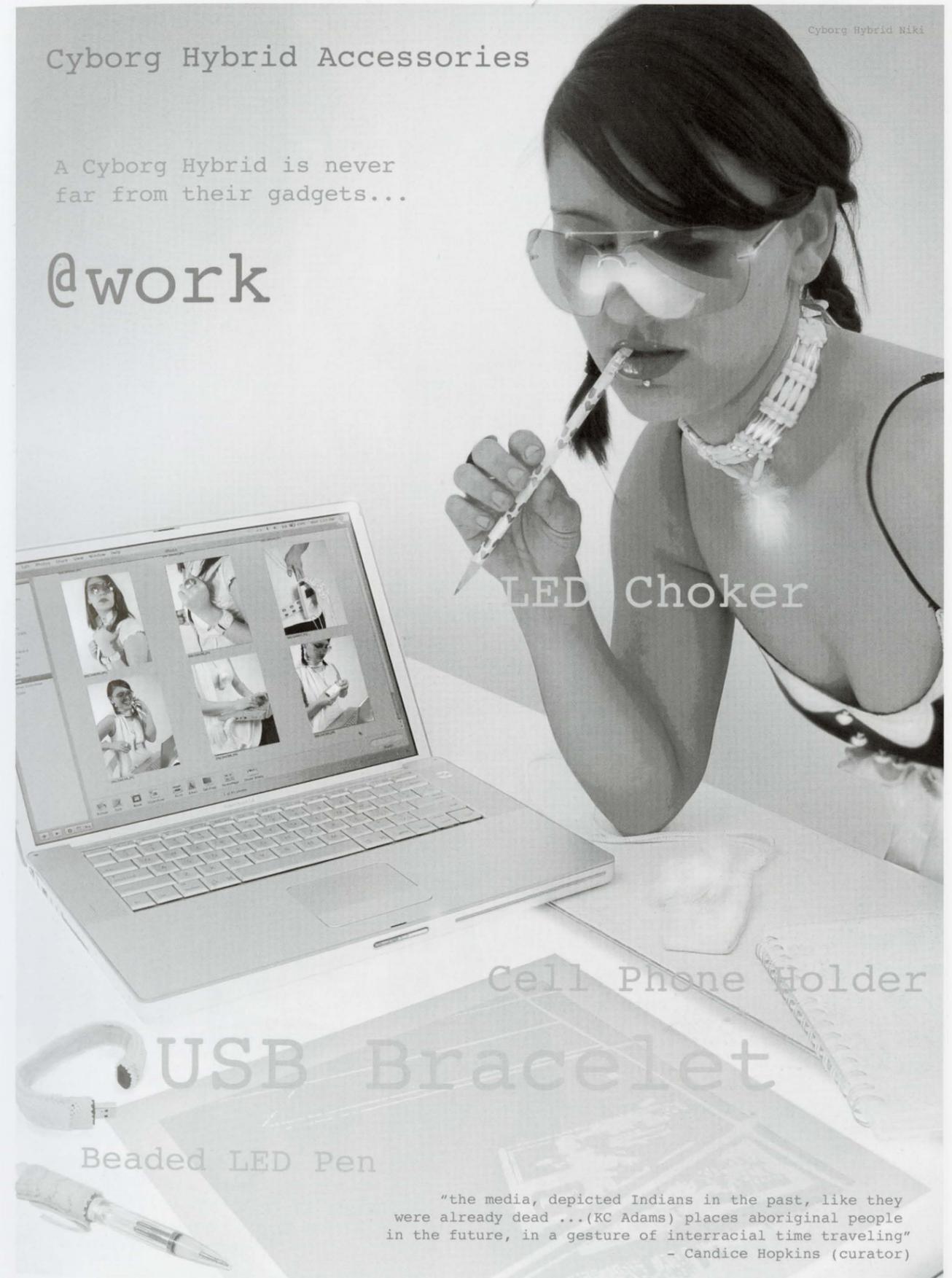
"These artists do not allow the slogans to define them, and their captured strength exposes the absurdity of common stereotypes"  
- Cathy Mattes (curator)

Cyborg Hybrid Wiki

## Cyborg Hybrid Accessories

A Cyborg Hybrid is never far from their gadgets...

# @work



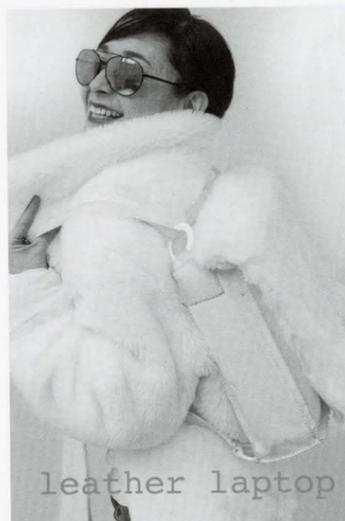
LED Choker

Cell Phone Holder

USB Bracelet

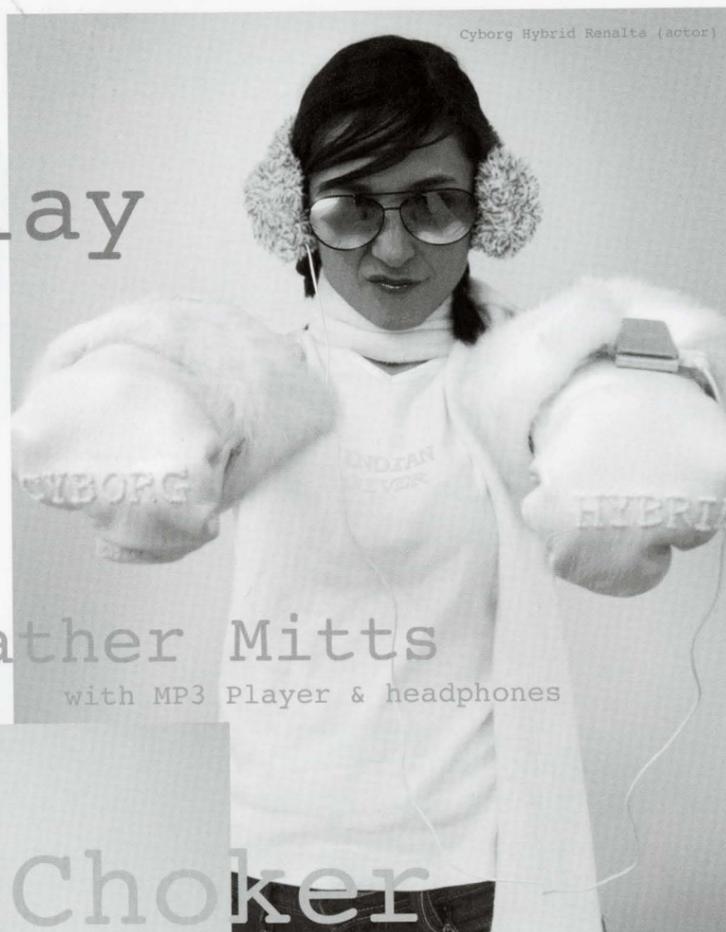
Beaded LED Pen

"the media, depicted Indians in the past, like they were already dead ... (KC Adams) places aboriginal people in the future, in a gesture of interracial time traveling"  
- Candice Hopkins (curator)



leather laptop bag

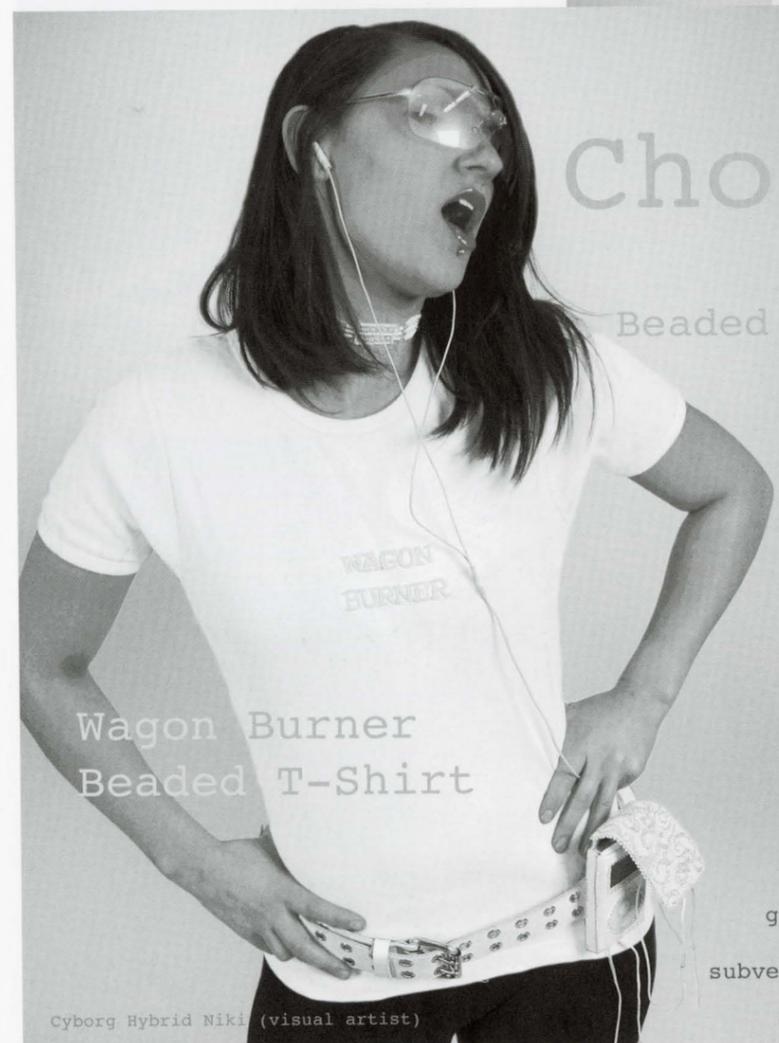
@play



Cyborg Hybrid Renalta (actor)

Beaded Leather Mitts

with MP3 Player & headphones



Wagon Burner  
Beaded T-Shirt

Cyborg Hybrid Niki (visual artist)

Choker

Beaded MP3 Holder



"Her use of theatrical staging gives her portraits a contemporary, celebrity feel that bellies their subversive and specific political edge"  
- Steve Loft (curator)



Dirty Little Indian  
Beaded T-shirt

LED Sandles

Choker  
& Beaded USB Bracelet



Cyborg Hybrid Jodi (writer & photographer)

"Adams envisions this futuristic creature as being liberated from 'isms' such as sexism and racism, with the ability to live harmoniously amongst each other"  
- Jasmin Pichlyk (The Manitoban)

## Are You?

- Artistic
- Aboriginal & Non-Aboriginal descent
- An Open-minded Thinker
- Tech Savy



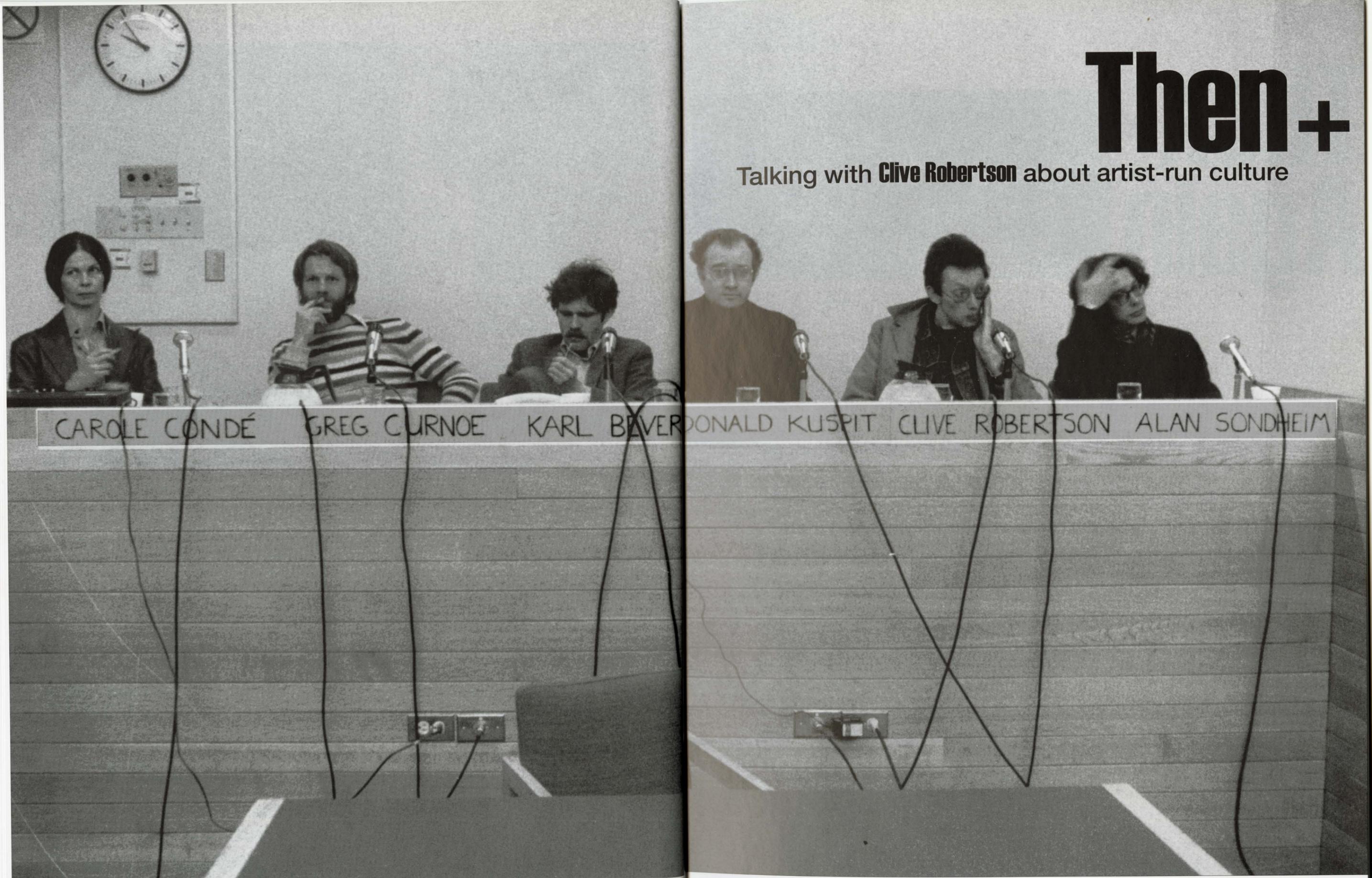
Beaded Leather  
Cell Phone Holder

Cyborg Hybrid Niki

join the Cyborg Hybrid community, go to [www.kcadams.net](http://www.kcadams.net) for more details.

# Then+

Talking with **Clive Robertson** about artist-run culture



# Then Again



Interview by Vera Frenkel

*Then + Then Again* exhibit at NAC, St.Catharines, 2007. Photo: Kyle Bishop.

There are some artists who create the climate the rest of us walk through. In my view Clive Robertson is such an artist. From his early collaborative initiatives in Calgary *w.o.r.k.s* — a “foreign contact centre” for the International Artists Cooperation network — the Parachute Center for Cultural Affairs, *Voicespence* audio art magazine, *Centerfold* magazine, and Arton’s Publishing, among others) to his Toronto debut as artist organizer in the history-making *Teleperformance* series for the fifth Network Independent Video Festival and conference (1978), he has functioned without fanfare as a catalyst.

Through *w.o.r.k.s* and later through Arton’s, Robertson produced some of Canada’s first international performance and national video festivals. Add to this the co-founding and naming of *FUSE* magazine and giving us via his writing the term “artist-run centre.” Instrumental in the start-up of *Vtape* and supporter of *A Space*’s early community arts focus, Robertson is acknowledged by artist-colleague and soulmate Lillian Allen as among those key to helping bring Black interdisciplinary art into focus for Toronto’s downtown arts community. As a performance artist and Director of Ottawa’s *Galerie saw Video*, he forged links with Québec City that resulted in *Performance au/in Canada 1970 – 1990*, (*Éditions Intervention*) the benchmark chronological history co-edited with Alain-Martin Richard in 1991.

This artist’s recent twin gifts to us are *Then + Then Again*, the wryly titled retrospective of his individual and collaborative work, currently touring, and *Policy Matters — Administrations of Art and Culture* (vzBooks, 2006), an excellent documentation and analysis of where we in the so-called cultural sector find ourselves and how we got here.

In a four-hour conversation in Toronto in February — a conversation that could easily have gone on for many more hours — it became clear that Clive Robertson has steadily and modestly created both an interdisciplinary path and an audience for socially engaged art, of the kind referred to above, all informed by his unwavering insistence, both prior to and following his involvement with the Independent Artists’ Union (Ontario), that artists should receive a living wage and that the administrators of artistic culture, including artists, should stop making excuses for why that is not possible. This commitment to the status of the artist was evident as well in his work on “Fragmenting the Power” (Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Kingston, 1991), a conference marking the 50th anniversary of the first national meeting of artists and others in Kingston in 1941 that gave rise to the formation of the Canada Council.

What follows is distillation of key aspects of our February conversation, plus responses from the sequence of telephone exchanges it prompted. Though perforce touching on only a few aspects of his work, including candid and helpful disclosures regarding the administrative and financial challenges of archiving and curating one’s own life’s work, it nevertheless signals the further depth and range of one man’s contribution via his art, his writing, his music and his sustained passion for a good that is shared. Clive Robertson, in my view, is someone who returns to the words “artist” and “citizen” a resonance they’ve long risked losing.

**VERA FRENKEL:** *Let me begin by asking about the juxtaposition of your recent projects. Last year with a first sabbatical from your teaching job, you finished editing your book, Policy Matters — Administrations of Art and Culture now published, and then worked on your archival retrospective, Then + Then Again — Practices Within An Artist-run Culture 1969 - 1996, which opened in January at Modern Fuel and is currently on tour. Were these two projects planned to relate and reinforce each other or was it happenstance?*

**CLIVE ROBERTSON:** The book and the exhibition were not meant to coincide but now that they are I am happy to be inviting two and more ways of addressing and assessing some of the known and lesser-known features of artist-run culture. As the title indicates, the book has a policy focus that examines and documents a search for alternative forms of artist self-governance within a Canadian context of public arts funding, what was tried, what worked and what failed when artists undertook collaborative projects of self-determination and cultural citizenship. Through a project sampling of my own work as an artist, curator, and publisher, the exhibition offers more detailed project markers that add to previous accounts of domestic performance and media arts histories.

**VF:** *The production of your retrospective happened very quickly and yet your book appears to be a project completed after a considerable period of time. Does this reflect preferences in the ways that you work and in between different media?*

**CR:** Initially by necessity, and later by habit, my own writing and art-making has occurred in intense but relatively brief chunks of time, but I prefer to work on bigger and longer projects with other people. When that doesn’t or can’t happen, projects tend to linger on longer than intended. *Policy Matters* was “in press” for 10-plus years and began as a

book of published essays that had appeared in *FUSE*, *Parallélogramme*, *Parachute* etc., together with some new writings. At one point in its life the book was meant to be published in tandem with Jessica Bradley and Lesley Johnstone’s collection, *Sightlines — Reading Contemporary Art* (Artex, 1994) and most recently with Dot Tuer’s *Mining the Media Archive* (vzBooks, 2005). Obviously, as time passed, delaying the project meant that its contents would become more “historical.” During the course of last summer, with Craig Leonard’s editing assistance, the “collection of essays” motif was dropped and instead the focus became a book about art and cultural policy.

The final bits of writing and proofing weren’t completed until October. This left some nine or 10 weeks to produce the retrospective including the production of six CDs, four DVDs, the photo archive cards that provide the timeline and structure for the project and so on. Time left for video and audio editing and challenges like getting printing done during the end of year holiday period were part of the drama. I am never sure if this is the attraction with larger projects with hard deadlines but thankfully there was not much shouting or crying.

Production involved sorting and organizing paper and photo archival materials, endless scanning and the work of video restoration and dubbing that was carried out by John Shipman and Kim Tomczak at Vtape. The first edition of the show was completed on time through the dedication of Gjen Snider, Programme Director of Modern Fuel in Kingston, who provided the installation design and construction; Matt Rogalsky, who mastered the audio, designed the CD inserts and duplicated the first batch of CDs; and James Greatrex, who edited and produced the menu-driven and looping versions of the DVDs. The show itself had been planned since late 2002; getting sufficient funding in place to be able to proceed was delayed to the point where the only path left was to be prepared to self-fund the production. So this was the gamble underlining the final period of exhibition production and it turned out to be a gamble that I lost.

**VF:** *At least financially. I think it might be of interest to others attempting this sort of thing to have a sense of the costs, psychic and other, involved.*

**CR:** In total the budget for the project is about \$44,000, which is pretty cheap for a retrospective that brings so many resources to the surface. That budget includes the costs of producing the audio and video editions, artists’ fees and touring the show to seven sites. Initially, the exhibition was offered to artist-run centres across the



*Then + Then Again* exhibit at Modern Fuel, Kingston, 2007. Photo: tobias c. van veen.

# NERVE THEORY



THERE IS NO PRIVACY AT THE SPEED OF LIGHT

Voicespondence cd — Nerve Theory H5N1: There is no privacy at the speed of light, 2007.  
Design: Matt Rogalsky.

country including cities where the original work and curatorial projects had been made. Modern Fuel applied for and received an Ontario Arts Council touring exhibition grant, facilitating partnerships with the Niagara Artists Company, Artspace, Artcite, Galerie saw Gallery, Vtape and Art Metropole. Independent from the funded tour, Le Lieu in Québec City was also included. As the host organization for the touring project, Modern Fuel committed \$5,000 and I committed a similar amount personally. What was missing was some \$12,000 for production costs. We applied to other relevant programmes in 2005 and were turned down and then made a last attempt in late 2006. By the time the final rejection came, the satisfaction of reclaiming this history masked a foreboding of the bills that I would have to pay.

**VF:** *Opting for being the artist-curator of your own retrospective ... was this a way of taking an 'artist-run' approach to its logical conclusion?*

**CR:** No. The initial proposal for *Then + Then Again* involved Julie Fiala, an emerging artist and curator working at Modern Fuel, who felt there were strong then-and-now connections to be made with earlier strategies of artist-run culture. As Julie had many other commitments working in the UK, I began to realize the burden of the exhibition for her in terms of the scope of its history and the necessary research required. So I decided to take on that aspect myself and Gjen Snider became the tour coordinator. Inasmuch as the project could be misread as creating a self-history I was and am concerned. Still, I would caution against the notion that such efforts make much of a dent on the more resilient machineries of even a local art history.

**Inasmuch as the project could be misread as creating a self-history I was and am concerned. Still, I would caution against the notion that such efforts make much of a dent on the more resilient machineries of even a local art history.**

GAYAP RHYTHM DRUMMERS  
PLASTERSCENE REPLICAS  
NUCLEAR BREAKDOWN  
THE GOVERNMENT  
CLIVE ROBERTSON  
FIFTH COLUMN  
JANET MARTIN  
DE DUB POETS



Left: Voicespondence  
Compilation Double cd —  
379 Adelaide St. W.,  
(1979 – 1985), 2007.  
Design: Matt Rogalsky.

Right: Voicespondence  
Vinyl 45 —  
Clive Robertson + Janet  
Martin, O Kanada, 1982.  
Design: Clive Robertson.

## 1. O KANADA

2. ICH DENKE, ICH HABE GENUG GESEHEN  
(I THINK I'VE SEEN ENOUGH)



CLIVE ROBERTSON/JANET MARTIN

Left: Voicespondence De Dub  
Poets postcard, 1983.  
Photo: Ric Amis.

Right: Voicespondence cd  
Clive Robertson Popular  
Songs (1981), 2007.  
Design: Matt Rogalsky.

DE DUB POETS



This all said, a key question that informs much of my work is how is art spoken for, and who or what does the speaking? This problem permeated an earlier archival exhibit of Canadian film and video texts, *Speaking Volumes*, I had produced for Oboro in 1997. For that exhibition I assembled documentary programmes and documentation works from the mid-1950s to the mid-1990s that manifested particular mediations of art. And in their varying modes of address I saw those visual texts as usefully thickening what presently survives as written commentary or analysis. What I learned from *Speaking Volumes* I applied to the narratives of my own retrospective.

**VF:** *I'd like to hear more about the purpose or intentions of the archival restoration, and how it relates to the content and organizing structure of the exhibition.*

**CR:** For the Modern Fuel exhibition the mission was to restore and digitize the print, photo, audio and video materials that I had accumulated and haphazardly stored and moved around since 1969. Some of it was lost in basement floods so it has not been lovingly kept. That said, there was a considerable amount of material from the 1970s and 1980s including audio cassette interviews that surprisingly turned out to be in worse shape than the video. In total the archive collection has about 60 hours of video and about 80 hours of audio and some 600 photos most of which had never been in circulation. What appears in the show is less than a 10th of that.

Where *Then + Then Again* differs from, say, the Image Bank Archive show, General Idea's Multiples show, or Luis Jacob's "Golden Streams," is that rather than presenting original paper artifacts —

posters, bookworks, etc. — everything has been converted to digital files. This allowed us to make several copies of the exhibition for simultaneous viewing and allows the contents of the exhibition and archive to be made available for closer scrutiny. To provide more relaxed viewing options we made a set of DVDs for take-home overnight or weekend viewing.

Prior to donating this all to a public archive — and as you know from your own experience there's nothing simple or quick about that — I am creating an interim stage. With co-copyright holder permissions, the exhibition contents will be up on a website with a sampling of audio files, streaming video and essays. The site will be called Voicepondence which will be the third iteration of the name. The first Voicespondence was an audio art magazine on audio cassette I started in Calgary in 1974. I later developed Voicespondence Records and Tapes, the Toronto-based label and recording studio after leaving my Managing Editor job at *FUSE*. In the early to mid-1980s Voicespondence produced the first vinyl releases by The Government, De Dub Poets, Fifth Column, the Gayap Rhythm Drummers, the Plasterscene Replicas and myself. CDs made for *Then + Then Again* include a new release, *H5N1* by Nerve Theory (Tom Sherman and Bernhard Loibner); a CD re-edition of the single copy of the LP *Space Perception and Construction* I made in 1969, where I read an art history essay that was my undergrad thesis; and re-editions from the Voicespondence label including my albums, *Popular Songs* (1981) and *Warfare versus Welfare* (1985). Andy Paterson kindly allowed me to include tracks by The Government that were not produced by Voicespondence for the 379 Adelaide West compilation cd.

Left Page  
 Top: W.O.R.K.S. Live Lice, Calgary  
 Cable TV, 1974.  
 Photo still: James Greatrex.

Center: Clive Robertson +  
 Frances Leeming, Sinking of the  
 Gigantic, Galerie SAW Vidéo,  
 1989. Photo: Tony Fohse.

Bottom: Artists' Publications  
 Window, Parachute Center for  
 Cultural Affairs, Calgary, 1976.  
 Photo: David Hargrave

Right Page  
 Left: Clive Robertson,  
 Synaesthetics lecture poster,  
 University of Calgary, 1972.

Center: Bank of Dontweall  
 cover for magazine, "Art and  
 Artists," 1974 (Still from  
 W.O.R.K.S.' Live Lice?)

Right: Su Clancy + Clive  
 Robertson in W.O.R.K.S. -  
 We Ourselves Roughly Know  
 Something exhibition,  
 University of Calgary Art  
 Gallery, Calgary, 1973.  
 Photo: Paul Woodrow.



So, for example, when viewing the show, you can read about  
 Voicespondence's distribution efforts and media coverage, then move  
 to listen to cds or burn free audio file samples, watch a clip of Lillian  
 Allen, Quammie Williams and myself mixing "Riddim an' Hard Times"  
 in the Voicespondence studio, plus view some of the "music videos"  
 utilizing Voicespondence recordings produced by John Watt, Craig  
 Berggold and myself.

**VF:** It's really astonishing to think of being able to access all that mate-  
 rial, all that history, in one space. Is there a convergence between the cur-  
 rent replicating technologies and on-line resources you chose to use and  
 what you have referred to as your earlier prototype publishing projects?

**CR:** The show and its planned aftermath are made in the context of  
 growing digital on-line resource collections including the Centre for  
 Canadian Contemporary Art site and the massive free historical and  
 contemporary collections of public domain materials found on the  
 Ubu web site. For the production of the exhibition, I opted for flexi-  
 bility and purchased a cd/dvd duplicator and printer instead of doing  
 short commercial disc runs.

My prime interest in video since 1972 has been as a form of documen-  
 tation. The Calgary-based international performance and publication  
 collective, w.o.r.k.s had access to both black and white video portapaks  
 and colour video through two cable community stations and we used  
 the technologies to do the six-hour artist television project, A

*Conceptographic Reading of Our World Thermometer* (1973), *Live Lice*  
 (1974), a satire community news cable program, and much more  
 besides. These materials made their way into early video art survey  
 shows both here and in England. The Parachute Center for Cultural  
 Affairs that I helped shape after w.o.r.k.s was a model performance,  
 video, archive, artist-in-residency and publishing artist-run centre,  
 sharing some characteristics with the Western Front, A Space, Véhicule,  
 and CEAC. The Parachute Center also birthed *Centerfold/FUSE*. There is a  
 1976 black-and-white video promo for the Parachute Center in the  
 exhibition. Arton's (the renamed Parachute Center) produced some of  
 the first packaged video editions on 3/4" cassette including Robert  
 Filliou's *Porta Filliou* (1977) that has been widely exhibited abroad.  
 When Marcella Bienvenue and I moved Arton's Publishing to Toronto  
 in 1978 to share a new space with Art Metropole on Richmond West,  
 the goal was to simultaneously publish in audio, video and print. The  
 stated plan was to develop an electronic publishing entity and by this  
 time we had made the prototypes. Prior to the instigation of the Media  
 Arts Section, the Visual Arts Section of the Canada Council was respon-  
 sible for all manner of artist-driven projects and in a sense made  
 Arton's consolidate its energies and the result became Fuse.

**VF:** So would you say that your retrospective draws attention to partic-  
 ular moments of collaborative production and demonstrates the inter-  
 connectedness of artist-run centres and publishing as a means of  
 developing a critical discourse?



## An Artist's Oath

**I will never, never ever,  
 forget that there is nothing,  
 creatively rewarding,  
 about not being paid.**

*\*from The Sinking of The Gigantic, 1989*



art and artists  
 november 1974 60p

CR: Exactly. I think prior to the mid-1980s and the emergence of weekly alternative papers like *now* or *Voir*, in Toronto alone there were free artist-driven tabloids like *Only Paper Today* (A Space), *Spill* (Fifteen Dance Lab), *Strike* (CEAC), and *Musicworks* (Music Gallery). And these tabs were read alongside periodicals like *Impulse*, *Impressions*, *File*, *Fireweed*, *Parallélogramme* and *Centerfold*, as well as *Broadsides* and *The Body Politic*. Taken together, this constituted a cross-disciplinary and active media presence that allowed for informed arts journalism and a considerable amount of argument and debate. One could suggest that with the growth of more organizations, tighter funding categories and density changes within the broader mediascape that a contemporary resuscitation of this media presence is unlikely. While funding and labour is always an issue I think more-and-different is possible if we think of what forms of e-publishing best fit our ongoing networking, criticism or advocacy needs and there has to be more imaginative thinking in how best to attract readers. Among the titles I have just mentioned no two of them necessarily shared the same

focus or approach though combined they had an engaged crossover readership. In hindsight it is too easy to say that because of this media presence earlier manifestations of artist-run culture had more agency. Yet artists definitely had a different orientation and attention to their own politics.

I've learned that younger artists, curators and critics share some of our past fondness both for looser collectives and, in activist terms, "bigger pictures." So perhaps events like TAAFI (Toronto Alternative Art Fair International) helps counter the hyper-pragmatism that followed Ontario's big hit by the Mike Harris government. However, one can ask, with the advent of more private monies, how well is the current "alternative" faring in relationship to a re-bolstered art mainstream? Do artists and curators see Toronto's upcoming super-budget arts festival, "Luminato," as a competitive encroachment, or will they scramble to be included in future editions? I do understand a gestalt where artists minimize the distinctions between different types of

presentation organizations and how they came to be what they are, to want in a sense to be "free agents," to work for whomever calls. My commitments just happen to be differently located. For some, these perennial troublings of artist and agency may seem "old school" but I'd suggest they look at the online debate that Jens Hoffman prompted with his 2003 proposition, "The Next Documenta Should Be Curated By An Artist."

VF: *The alignments that you describe and have mapped in the exhibition are certainly worth paying attention to and both show a compelling desire to "dance with the one that brung you." Tell me more about your sense of the hybrid nature of artist-run culture.*

CR: My conception of an "artist-run centre" was and remains that it is a hybrid form that had work to do that was more ambitious than simply providing a display space run by artists. I prefer models of artists-initiated organizations that combine the functions of production and commission with display and publication. From the mid-

1970s to the present I have critiqued artist-run centres as much as I have championed them. Over the decades in different cities and with different levels of public and self-funding I have concentrated my efforts in artists' collectives, artist run-centres and their corresponding advocacy groups. In Kingston I continue to engage with modest projects that to some degree are sanctioned by the community in which I live. I produce an annual evening of student performance work, *ART Happens* with Matt Rogalsky, and earlier with Craig Leonard, I co-organized an "adventurous sound festival" called *Tone Deaf*.

So even as the magazine *Centerfold/FUSE* became the core focus for what had formerly been an artist-run centre, we continued with performance and video curatorial projects. I curated the *Teleperformance* festival in Toronto as part of the "Fifth Network" independent video conference organized by A Space that was cablecast. *Centerfold/FUSE* continued twinning efforts with *Voicespence* — by printing interviews with audio artists and bands, while *Voicespence* produced vinyl discs.

## My conception of an "artist-run centre" was and remains that it is a hybrid form that had work to do that was more ambitious than simply providing a display space run by artists.



Left page clockwise:  
W.O.R.K.S. Amongst The Esels, Alberta College of Art, 1973. Photo: Unknown.

Clive Robertson, *Explaining Pictures to Dead Air*, Teleperformance Festival, Toronto, 1978. Photo: Rodney Werden.

1st World Festival of W.O.R.K.S at The Workshop, Calgary, 1972. (photo includes Margaret Dragu, Co-Motion, Paul Woodrow, Rick Holyoke, Clive Robertson) Photo: Unknown.

Poster for Clive Robertson's In A Drunken Stupor, The Funnel, Toronto, 1984. Design: Unknown.

Right Page:  
Centerfold/FUSE 1976-83 photo archive card from *Then + Then Again*, 2007. Design: Gjen Snider.



issue of the magazine. Before *Centerfold* began as a tabloid newspaper with its "centerfold" page of programming announcements (hence the name), the Parachute Center regularly produced an illustrated double-sided "newsheet" that described past events, announced upcoming programming and made requests for donations to its art publications archive. For three first editions, I wrote the copy and Parachute Center director, Don Mober, provided the photos. I borrowed the design identity from David Mowbray's *Address* that were instead an documentation of the touring *Fluxus* performance festival and printed at Delta Centre Press. ALMOST A YEAR LATER, I edited the first *Centerfold* tabloid in September 1976, a publication produced by myself and Marcelle Belemme. Editorially the tabloid focused upon the Parachute Center and artist's programming allowing us to publish interviews and reviews and provide commentary about the projects of visiting artists like Robert Rauschenberg, Steve McCallery, General Idea, and Margaret Dragu. In-house artists, Lita Stopp, Eugene Chabouss, Marcelle Belemme and myself even soon to be reinforced by essays or reports from Dick Higgins, Kenneth Coates-Smith, Tom Sherman, AA Bronson, Lisa Steele, Bruce Barber, Doris Cypri, etc. THE LAST VOLUME OF *Centerfold* in 1978-80 moves closer to what is today with the name change to *FUSE* we would call a "cultural news magazine." Just as General Idea has chosen the personal journal of *LIFE* magazine as a format for *FILE*, I chose *TIME* magazine as the format for *Centerfold*, an arts magazine that wanted to engage in cultural news and events. Both publications were modeled in *TIME* and *FILE* by "news and design" magazine that generated design from publications related to the arts. I was inspired by *CRASH* "An Art Magazine" for a story about an American bartender's attempt to squish a Canadian piggyback. A news magazine format for *Centerfold* provided a Publisher's Note, a News and Report Section, Columns, Features and a Review Section that could be "Books," "Music," "Film," "Video," "Exhibitions," etc. Our space in depth cover stories — at the start in the early issues — would become supplements, e.g. a 16 page supplement on the trial and media coverage of the national gas and boiler newspapers, *The Body Politic*, edited by Lisa Steele (1978), "Immigration: Do You Have Canadian Experience?" edited by Karl Beveridge, 1979 (also a page), a catalog of video or performance festivals we organized, etc. In 1980 Lisa Steele, Tom Sherman and I started *FUSE* with various interests and ideas about how a journal based upon the politically engaged expertise of artists, musicians, poets, activists, lawyers, economists and academics could share a common news space. When *FUSE* entered an editorial collective there were many discussions and arguments about focus, Steele and I who shared the Managing Editor role were the year that too much was there in flux to warrant a fixed focus. It was *CRASH*'S OF the arts community and the art press accused *Centerfold/FUSE* magazine (name) Lisa Steele, Carole Condit and myself) together with Jane Wright and others of orchestrating a takeover of A Space at an ACM when there were already other proposals for development (that we had published) on the table. Our desire to see a wider bandwidth of cultural communities having access to reappropriation for sharing an artist-run center ultimately remained the fifth we were bringing about within the magazine itself. That the curatorially innovative and at times during A Space, would undergo a change only heightened the symbolism. Plus, the actual internal crisis that would permit A Space to be fought over would productively allow other emerging Toronto artist-run centers to collectively occupy some of contemporary art ground that A Space had formerly occupied. The new "community arts" model of A Space, for some time categorized for its programming committees and supported a shipping of standards, in some ways demonstrated how the logic of self-determination argued by the art scene movement had not been well enough digested. As time passed, the directorship of A Space and — somewhat collectively, *FUSE* — would be endorsed. These kinds of medium challenges were the precursor for more upheavals and cultural change within the self-made institutions of artist-run culture in the early 1980s.

The amalgamation, *Images Film and Video Festival*, now 20 years old, was preceded by the *New Works Show* (video — Toronto) and *Canadian Images Festival* (film — Peterborough). Independent from the start up of *Canadian Images*, I launched *The Canadian Video Open* in Calgary with its statuettes and cash award features and Lisa Steele and I produced a second edition in Toronto that played at the first Cineplex in its first week at the Eaton Centre with a catalogue insert for *Centerfold*. Similarly, *Less Medium More Message* — a survey of video documentaries from Canada, Britain and the us organized by Lisa Steele, John Greyson, Tony Whitfield and Stuart Marshall saw FUSE again incorporating a special catalogue. As a cultural news magazine, FUSE was to become a complicated and compelling project of representational and identity politics and by the end of the 1980s there were insufficient funding and personnel resources to further the magazine's contents by instigating something like FUSEBooks. For me this has been a recurrent regret.

A number of artist-run centres have invested in publishing programmes including *vz* in Toronto, *Artspeak* in Vancouver and *Le Lieu* in Québec City. By the mid-1990s, Coach House Press instigated its online publishing operation claiming to only make revenue from “the fetish item formerly known as the book.” My point here is that hybridity in whatever forms it takes provides a necessary degree of self-sufficiency for artist-run culture that then can be augmented by other sites of publicity and validation.

As a teacher and critic looking for information resources, I think all Canadian art and culture magazines should put their published feature articles and reviews online or burn them to DVDs and pay royalties. And they should be funded and supported to do exactly that. There is

so much usable writing from our periodicals that every five years or so appears to vanish. It is banal to say that by and large, art history materially survives through the efforts of museum storage and discursively survives through the force of master narratives. And yet there is something in our deeply-felt concern about local cultural amnesia. We imagine that somehow somewhere most of everything has been rigorously collected and indexed and is accessible. If that were indeed the case research would not be the challenging exercise that it is — even when with a remembered sense of history we appear to know what we are looking for. And in this sense *Then + Then Again* and projects like it are attempts at countering the unintended neglect.

**VF:** *In the preface card to the show you write: “The exhibition further complicates common distinctions made between individual and collaborative work and between art-making and infrastructure building.” Is your contention that artist-run culture has produced a new type of artist?*

**CR:** It has always been hard to argue for an organizational culture that privileges artists' interests and economic rights, to argue against notions that “artist-run culture” is limited to its parallel functions, or that its ambitions to be alternative or oppositional are automatically stymied by the processes of professionalization or institutionalization. To agree with the determinisms of the latter is to cede too much ground to those who are invested in the equally limited prospects of reforming traditional tightly-mandated institutions, who see all this noise about “artists' rights and responsibilities” as being a distraction from a focus on the production of “compelling artworks” or an otherwise collegial discourse about critical practice.

I just leafed through a copy of *Vancouver Art & Economies* edited by Melanie O'Brian and read Reid Shier's chapter, “Do artists need artist-

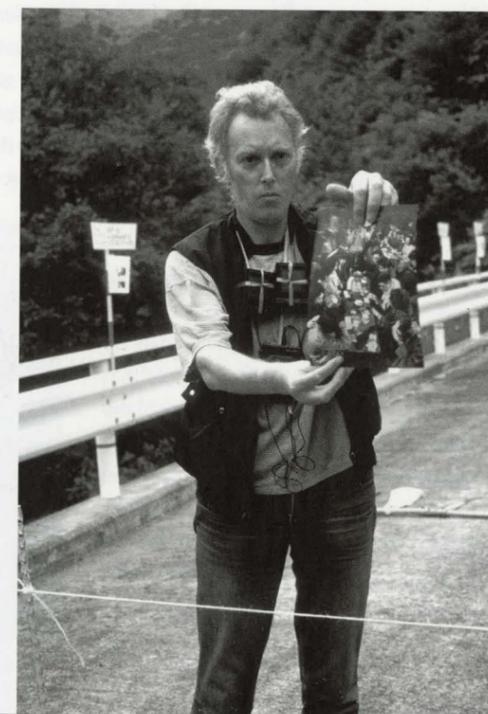
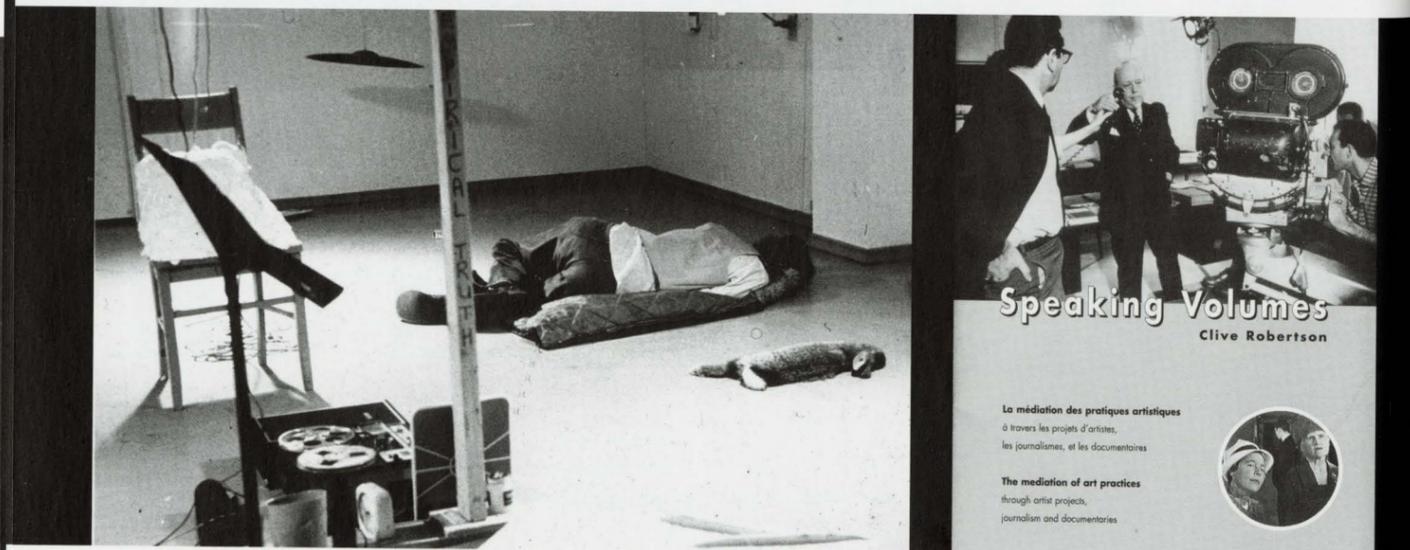
run centres?” It's an amended version of a paper that he gave at a closed-door symposium on curating at York University where I presented a preview of *Then + Then Again*. I seem to have irritated Reid and I am sure many others over the years with what he calls my “semantic sophistries.” He objects to my pitting “programming” against “curating” and “coordinating” against “editing” as I have done in order to identify some ways of working within artist-run culture. I argue that programming and coordinating can be seen as different methods used to interrogate and diffuse power. I consider that one of *Parallélogramme's* achievements as a shared artist-run centre periodical was a horizontal rather than a vertical process of editing that the editors have referred to as co-ordination. I think it was Richard Fung and Ellen Flanders in an *oise* symposium on film and video curating (*Terms of Address*, 2003) who provided useful distinctions between “programming” as a reflection of the state of a field, and “curating” being about making an argument. They raised many questions, for example, how might different modes of selection result in different viewing experiences? In the collection, “Critical Terms for Art History,” art historian, Richard Shiff makes a different argument about the fluidity of role functions between the artist, the critic and the historian, who can all act out parts of each other's roles. He names some distinguishing characteristics of practice between the “artist,” the “critic” and the “historian,” which he calls “modes” and are based in psychologies.

When a senior artist friend recently floated a project idea to a Toronto gallery curator/director he was told that the curator was only interested “in projects of his own instigation.” For me this is “artists' talk” speaking to desires for both “overt expressiveness” (to use Shiff's taxonomy) and professional autonomy. Such statements of “curatorial freedom” need to be weighed against the scrutiny and rule sets

applied to artist-run centres and other smaller contemporary arts organizations by arts councils. The rules applied and the rewards given to different sorts of recipient entities are hardly consistent even within artist funding programs themselves. This speaks to an asymmetry well reflected in the ruckus surrounding a proposal to raise a national schedule of artists' fees, as well as in the special categorizations and amount levels given by the Canada Council in its recent allocation of supplementary funding to organizations known as *sofi*. When you see which disciplinary organizations were deemed to be “key institutions” the distinction is both offensive and anachronistic — particularly where it clumsily devalues all of the layers of infrastructure that have been built here since 1960.

*Then + Then Again ... will be at Vtape, Toronto 8 June – 6 July; Artspace, Peterborough 8 June – 14 July; Artcite, Windsor 12 October – 10 November; Galerie saw Gallery 15 December – 15 January, 2007.*

*Vera Frenkel's installations and new media projects have been shown at the Venice Biennale, Documenta ix, MoMA and the Freud Museum, London among other venues. Her touring project on the travails of a dysfunctional cultural organization, The Institute™: Or, What We Do for Love, (the-national-institute.org/tour) received a 2004 ccca Untitled Art Award and in 2006 was installed at the National Gallery of Canada to mark her Governor General's Award. Of Memory and Displacement, A DVD/CDROM collection of Frenkel's media works and writings is distributed by Vtape.*



Left Page  
Left: Clive Robertson, *Sculptured Politics of Joseph Beuys*, Parachute Center for Cultural Affairs, Calgary, 1975. Photo: David Hargrave.

Right: Clive Robertson, *Speaking Volumes – The mediation of art practices, 1954-1996*, catalogue cover, Oboro, Montréal, 1997. Design: Yudi Sewraj.

Right Page: Clive Robertson, *Taschibosen/The Bridge*, Tajima Performance Festival, Japan, 1991. Photo: Paul Couillard.

**Observable Bodies:**  
 Naufus Ramirez-Figueroa's *My Navel, My Great-Grandfather*

24 November, 2006  
 Tribe Inc.

review by Warren Arcan

November in Saskatoon, in -26° weather, Naufus Ramirez-Figueroa presented his performance "Nu Muxux, Nu Nim-Mam/My Navel, My Great-Grandfather" in Lori Blondeau's backyard; she's the director of Tribe Inc., an Aboriginal arts collective that develops independent spaces for the presentation of new Aboriginal art works.

Ramirez-Figueroa's stated intent with this piece was to embody the range of forces at work in his life: he's a Guatemalan exile living in Canada; he's Mayan and Spanish; he's a postcolonial subject and a queer subject; a contemporary artist researching his family and his folkloric culture; he's a graduate student at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. For "Muxux/Navel" he returned to Guatemala and did extensive research into Mayan-Quiché dance-drama and into his Great-Grandfather's role as a dancer and, later, as the dance sponsor.

Ramirez-Figueroa works with imagery from a key Quiché dance called Palo Volador (Flying Tree), in which four dancers hang and swirl from a 100-foot pole that symbolizes the world tree. The story of the dance comes from the Popul Vuh. The sequence most relevant to "Muxux/Navel" is abbreviated as follows: a character named *Zipacná* digs a deep hole for 400 Boys who want to erect a giant house pole.

But he understands the 400 Boys intend to kill him by dropping a massive house pole on him when he's still at the bottom. So *Zipacná* digs a cave in one of the walls to save himself. He hides in the cave and calls up that his job is done. The 400 Boys drop the massive pole down on him and then celebrate his death with fermented beverages. Later, *Zipacná* escapes and has his revenge when the 400 Boys are slumbering and stupefied with drink.

Ramirez-Figueroa says, as the sponsor of the dance, his Great-Grandfather was responsible for "feeding the hole," meaning he was responsible for erecting the dancers' pole and making sure the hole was dug. "The hole for this dance is referred to as *Ri Muxux Uleu*, navel of the earth, and my Great-Grandfather was in charge of digging the hole." And as a way of ensuring the survival of the dancers, he packed the cave at the bottom of the hole with meat.

In Blondeau's backyard, Ramirez-Figueroa begins by "feeding" the Muxux/Navel. In preparation, he creates a circular pile, a mandala, of sweets: sugar, flavoured juice crystals, candy and chocolate gold coins. On top of that, he arranges firewood to melt the snow and thaw the frozen ground.



All images in this review are of Naufus Ramirez-Figueroa's, *Nu Muxux, Nu Nim-Mam — My Navel, My Great-Grandfather* performance, November 2006. Courtesy: Tribe, Inc.

Given his stated concerns, Ramirez-Figueroa's "food" choices become metonymies for the forces in his life. Different kinds of sweets are, at once, Sugar, Food Security, Global Economies, Syncreticism and Colonialism, and also Festival, Play, Fun, Pleasure. They all burn together. But it's a double gesture because each Force also organizes a Body of Ramirez-Figueroa: Postcolonial, Queer, Exile, Guatemalan, Ladino, Mestizo, Grandson, Artist and more besides. What results is a rich matrix of Forces qua Bodies: the multiple bodies of Ramirez-Figueroa.

Once the snow melts and earth thaws, he shovels away the coals and begins digging the Muxux/Navel. He will dig off and on all afternoon and into the evening as the audience mills in and out of the house and the backyard; everyone enjoys the food and drink provided by Ramirez-Figueroa and Tribe Inc. At about 8:00 P.M. the Muxux/Navel is three feet deep and five feet across. For him, it is important that he have a kinship with the ground on which the performance takes place; that's why the performance happened where it did — with friends, with his extended, ever-extending, community. This makes "Muxux/Navel" not an image of an



individual but a communal meditation: self and identity as a shared phenomenon.

At roughly 9:30 p.m., he gives a low-key indication that the performance is about to start. We are sitting and standing around the kitchen table, talking, eating, drinking and waiting. The artist looks at the clock and then out the window. To no one in particular, he says, "I guess it's time to start." He puts on his coat and shoes, signaling to us it's time to go outside.

We gather around the Muxux/Navel. Taking off his coat, clothed only in shirt, pants and shoes, he begins working in what we know is a dangerous cold. But as he enters the performance space, we are put at ease as we observe Ramirez-Figueroa is not hunching over and shivering: we trust in what he is doing as his body is not a body reacting to extreme cold. He has moved past his body and into the matrix of his multiple bodies. Then he begins a series of intuitive explorations.



He puts on the coat his Great-Grandfather wore as a dancer — a formal jacket with a narrow waist made of dark fabric and decorated with gold and shiny bits that reflected light like tiny mirrors. He is a much larger person than his Great-Grandfather, and the effort of fitting into the coat articulates the difficulties of his multiple bodies. He takes snow into his mouth and breathes over it, places it under his coat and holds it there, hard. He grips the lapels and tries to close the front of his coat. He grimaces and breathes heavy. In a coat of lights, he places himself in the Muxux/Navel and plays with the light bouncing off the mirrors and into the Navel. He curls up and lays on his side, twisting and writhing in a coat of lights in the cold, snow, and dirt, writhing with the matrix of multiple bodies: It reads not as ordeal-as-trauma, but as displays of strength.

He finds an ending and the audience applauds. But it is not over yet. Something else had joined him in the Navel, and stepped out with him. Many audience members reported little hallucinations. One person saw the snow he held become a rock while another saw it become a turtle. "The mirrors on his coat turned into clocks." "I saw him as his great-grandfather turning into a monkey." "I felt a swirling energy that

pulled me into the hole." For me, time tightened and loosened.

The navel suggests an empty centre whose structure is meaningful only in terms of what moves through it and the relations it creates. Ramirez-Figueroa established metonymic relations with the forces making his bodies and created a new body for himself and his circumstantial community. His preparations for "Muxux/Navel" are a kind of somatic mapping of the bodies in his body; bodies he must negotiate and synthesize on a daily basis, possibly, moment to moment.

His performance transformed his potentially intolerable historic situations by resolving them in new formations for his, and our, bodies as products of his discoveries in process-based endurance work.

Warren Arcan is a Vancouver-based artist and writer. Or writer and artist.

**Imagined Passage:**  
 Vida Simon/Excavation Drawings

Performance-installation,  
*Hôtel de la Montagne, Montréal*  
 (part of *Viva! Art Action+*  
 by Skol Gallery)  
 10 October – 15 October, 2006

review by Andrew Forester

Vida Simon's *Excavation Drawings* was a performance that took place in a hotel room over six consecutive days. An art-audience visited this space outside the normal cultural circuit, waiting in the lobby to be escorted up to the room where

the artist was living, dreaming and drawing. Inside, the room's surfaces were covered with newsprint; the floor, walls, sofa and all the furniture. On the evening I visited, a tear in this neat "inside skin" made a hole through which I could see the dresser mirror. The room's windows looked out over downtown and if they wished, visitors could go out onto the balcony and look down de la Montagne towards Ste-Catherine (around the corner is the hotel where John and Yoko conducted their 1969 *Bed-In*). The artist made eye contact, a kind of welcome and acknowledgement that we are not strangers, or don't have to be, that we are simultaneously confined and not confined within a theatrical construction. In this instant there was a deft and precise articulation of the special rules of this real but exceptional situation. For a few minutes we are to convene within this exception. Then the performer slides into the chair-space underneath the desk, curls her back against us and is gone. My companion and I explore the room, which is littered with charcoal drawings, some simple, like notetaking, some worked and heavy with soot. A few drawings are pinned to a line stretching across the room.

Eventually Simon comes out from under the desk to write stories on the paper-covered floor at our feet for us to read (one story is about the chamber maid who came to work and may have been alarmed by what she saw). She works on drawings and interrupts this concentrated activity at one point to hand us walnuts as a gift. She never speaks. Simon works with charcoal in our presence, erasing, rubbing, drawing and writing, erasing again, until each piece of Arches paper has, it seems, held and released a thousand thoughts and images. These stories-as-drawing



All images in this review are of Vida Simon's *Excavation Drawings*, 2006, performance-installation. Courtesy: the artist.

emerge from the process of living, eating and sleeping in this place. Some are about growing up not far from here; sometimes they are surreal and autobiographical, sometimes more political. They are about a personal history of this place but also touch on matters of urban culture, economic disparity and in another mode of inquiry (in academia), might be defined as urbanism. As visitors we witness a slice of this inquiry, the accumulated dreams-on-paper, stories told through writing and gesture. In an inversion of normal artist-run performance practice we only see a fragment of a longer process (a half-hour out of six days) rather than an event that is a highly compressed and heightened moment or "show." I find this distinction important. Even if we could consult the archive of drawings, a whole is not accessible since many drawings took place on every sheet.

*Excavation Drawings* also involves a writing collaboration with Canadian poet Erin Moure. A text on *Excavation Drawings* by Moure is available in the room. Though physically contained in a pamphlet on a table by the door, conceptually this text expands outwards into a new geography. Like the clothesline of drawings, it cuts a

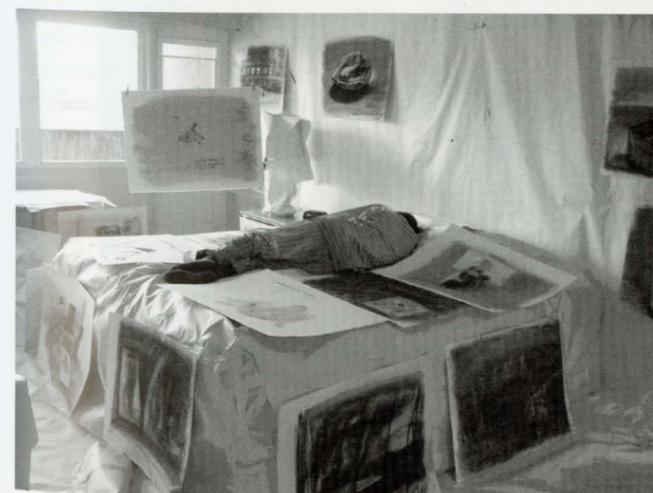
rich diagonal across this plane, across the room and out into spaces beyond. In conventional terms this is a cross-disciplinary collaboration. Better to say they breathe together for a while. A little duet in which our reading crosses her drawing crosses her writing and enucleates a few more layers of imagined space laid-up over the richness of real space. Moure's text, in English, French and Galician, draws on her own preoccupation with translation as a boundary-crossing and redrawing act. To translate is to redraw language on a different ground, on a different basis of knowledge. Why this deliberate subversion/sub-version?

Moure writes,

*To be hearing then a translation practice opening, a practice of interpretation conducted under closed-air conditions: the sound of charcoal, motion, rubbing that extends and opens time's small room or "cabina."... There is an element thus of swim in this excavation of erasure and setting down, till all that forms the "pictural" is the gesture itself, the floating bowl que reborda flúidico, and real spoon, "a dream of ash teeth" ... the burnt fist of wood, madeira queimada, and the calcination, out of ash, (is there still, yet, metaphor)*

*comes gesture, as if ash is not the end but is a diction, a fistula, passage outward.*

What is left of *Excavation Drawings* is the last layer worked out of each drawing and the last draft of Moure's text. Layers of charcoal and typeset words become a metaphor for memory. Or become memory. The material itself becomes a sign of transformation and occasionally of mortal dread; soot caked on the inner surfaces of being. Charcoal dust is transformed into depictions of charred forest, of shelters, of graves. Simon performs in striped pajamas, simultaneously whimsical in the rhyming of a childlike morning playfulness and ominous as a faint echo of a concentration camp uniform. This work seems to treasure the complexity of multiple meanings. At the same time the process is articulated by an awareness of the theatrical devices being used. I am not very interested in drawing, but I come and sit, and I am "drawn to" by Simon: drawing becomes storytelling, communication in the present tense, rather than object making or archiving of experience. Performance art (which I am only tentatively more interested in than drawing) is twisted out of its cabaret event-splash cliché and becomes an action of meditative duration with which we interact for a few moments.

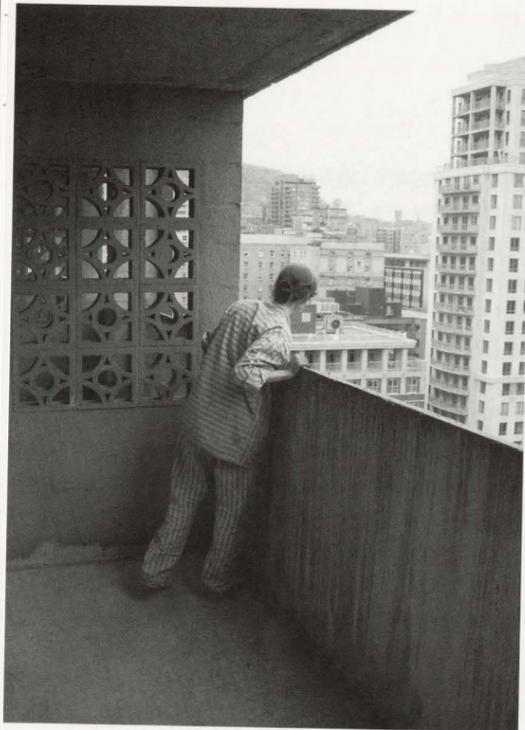


I was interrupted in writing this review by seeing an interview with Jean Genet, recorded in the writer's last years. In the conversation, the interviewer prods for biographical details. Genet squirms and gently rebuffs. What further meaning is to be taken from the facts of his life as a piece of theatre? Is his homosexuality a political act? He likens the interview to a police interrogation. Eventually, exasperated by the situation, he asks the film crew (who can't be seen) if they would not like to put an end to this, push him off the chair, flip this ridiculous and conventional construction. The interviewer has tried to reinforce the image of Genet as a rebel and iconoclast but Genet seems to know that the real subversion lies elsewhere, not in the surface image of rebellion reinforced by biographical anecdotes. How do you pass the time? I eat in restaurants and watch people ... Where do you live? In Morocco ... You have a house? I live in a hotel ...

Genet sees a distinction between the image of rebellion that the interviewer is trying to mine and the actual forms and boundaries that hem our thinking and need to be carefully and knowingly stressed into rupture. He refuses to be corralled on the surface of things, insisting on the right to provoke below the surface and across boundaries in such a way that no

single work remains safely in its genre, but rather they become "events" (as opposed to a representation of a position), spilling across boundaries to provoke conversation. I like this as a definition of performance. I see the image of a hotel room that Genet pokes towards the interviewer as a refusal of family and normalcy, an acknowledgment of class division, of passage as the only permanence, of separateness and solitude as givens of human existence. To "inhabit" a hotel is emblematic of the *normalness* of these things; an unbinding of the static fabric of *normalcy*. In this sense the room is a trope, a word at play. John and Yoko's hotel room down the street decades ago is much different (a stage for a media event made out of a bed) yet at play in the same way. And Simon's room also.

Do performance art practitioners sometimes only mimic the postures and tropes of outrageousness, supplied by the archive of performance practice; repeating the event-style of the happening, the shock of the stressed body or the cabaret of transgression? We have entered the era of the professional marginal artist where the image of marginality we cultivate may to some extent only be conventional thinking, marginally funded. The challenge to artists is to weave a path out of this "marginal as normal," to understand the theatre of culture in a different way and activate or engage it on layers other than those that are most obvious. It is precisely this block (this possibility/impossibility) that draws me towards performance. In this sinking ship, I search from room to room for portholes that lead away from a repetition of formal strategy. In this context the evolution of Genet's subversions (and Moure's sub-versions) are a useful reference.



live performance with video surveillance technology) and *Duet* (a dance performance reenacting the gestures of a suicide bomber). His writing about performance, photography and visual art has appeared in many publications. [www.reluctant.ca](http://www.reluctant.ca)

## Institutionalizing Fear: Don Gill's *D'Arcy Island*

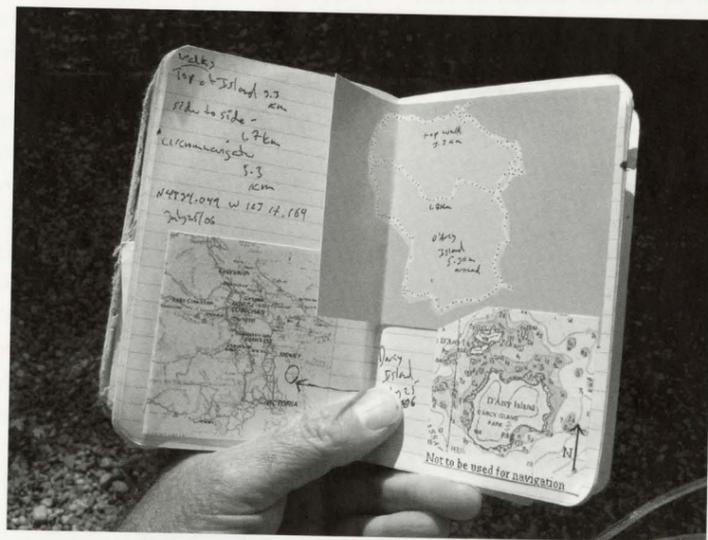
Southern Alberta Art Gallery  
Curated by Joan Stebbins  
23 September – 12 November, 2006

review by Leila Armstrong

During a search of Victoria, British Columbia's Chinatown in 1891, local health officials (accompanied by police) discovered five men bearing the visible markings of leprosy. The municipal government reacted by expropriating a tiny isle in the Haro Strait to serve as a leper colony. From 1891 through 1924, D'Arcy Island was used to quarantine Chinese railroad workers and immigrants found infected with the disease.<sup>1</sup> With the exception of supply ship deliveries of food, opium and coffins, they

had to be wholly self-sufficient,<sup>2</sup> receiving no treatment and living under conditions so deplorable that many escapes were attempted. This prompted the opening of a lazaretto on Bentinck Island, off the coast of William Head in 1924.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, at the same time as D'Arcy Island was in operation, those of European descent suffering with the disease on the east coast of Canada were sent to the lazaretto in Tracadie, New Brunswick where patients were housed in a hospital under the care of a physician and nuns.<sup>4</sup>

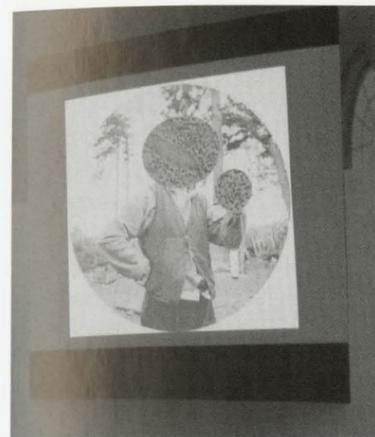
Don Gill's installation *D'Arcy Island* addresses the relationship between social history and physical landscape. Part of a larger project titled *The Carceral Landscape*, Gill uses D'Arcy Island as a case study to explore the use of remote geography to segregate the threatening and dangerous from the majority population. The use of islands to separate those considered undesirable from the mainstream has a particular resonance today considering the strategic application of military prisons and detention camps, such as Guantanamo Bay, to safeguard an idealized American homeland.



Don Gill, *D'Arcy Island Notebook Map*, 2006, matreflex mural.

In this preoccupation I have learned something from Vida and Erin in their excavations. With *Excavation Drawings* the points of escape come in between the layers of language and the mapping of knowledge; in the translation. Not on the biographer's surface, not on the surface of the everyday, not on the surface of polished professional moves, but in the poetic excavation. Heroic upheaval can sometimes be passed over in favour of a careful dig in the light of a subtle understanding of this theatre of culture — the activated space between the work and the visitors. Simon's *Excavation Drawings* begin this exploration at a place where I would not have expected it, in a little escape hatch that has opened in a wall made of paper.

Andrew Forster's recent work includes *Cinéma* (an outdoor event for an audience seated indoors), *Moat* (an installation using the moat surrounding Canada House in London merging



Don Gill, *D'Arcy Island* (installation detail), 2006, Southern Alberta Art Gallery. Photo: Don Gill.

*D'Arcy Island* has its roots in a collaborative work begun with artist Lorna Brown in 1996 when Brown and Gill visited the island and shot their initial film and video footage. Gill resurrected the project more recently, utilizing his and Brown's earlier video and 16mm footage as well as newly acquired material.<sup>5</sup> In this work, Gill also draws inspiration from Ansel Adams' 1943 – 44 photographs of Manzanar, a WWII internment camp for Japanese Americans located in the high desert of Northern California, east of the Sierra Nevada Mountains.<sup>6</sup> Photographing Manzanar allowed Adams to document the desolation of an internment camp while emphasizing its residents' triumph over "defeat and despair" through the building of a community in what he considered "an arid (but magnificent)" setting.<sup>7</sup> The impressive natural beauty conveyed by his images demonstrate Adams' belief in the potential of landscape to transcend politics. Gill's installation, on the other hand, challenges Adams' notion that landscape can emancipate one's spirit, if not one's corporeal realities. By addressing landscape as a method of incarceration, Gill focuses our attention on the friction between ideology and lived experience.

Upon entering the gallery space, one encounters a colour map of the island overlaid with a microscopic image of

"mycobacterium leprae" as well as path markers indicating possible "routes of perambulation." This serves as an ideal introduction to the exhibition, positioning the disease and the historical negotiation of the disease as literally written on the land.

Kitty-corner to the map is Gill's first projection, "Island," which is comprised of four images arranged in a small grid over a larger, background landscape. These include footage of Gill on the island, panning the landscape with a film camera, thereby redressing the false objectivity of traditional documentary. Others show the shoreline, a hole in the ground, an empty cement bunker covered in graffiti, a boat on the horizon, blowing wild grass and a walking path. The accompanying ambient soundtrack consists of chirping birds, footfalls on gravel, unidentifiable thuds and the clicking whir of a film projector. This combination provides an overture to the installation, initiating connections and relationships between the pastoral landscape/seascape and the remnants of human habitation. One gets the sense of undertaking a reconnaissance or study of the terrain: the footfalls on gravel could be our own.

The second projection, which mixes earlier footage from the collaboration with Brown, titled "Prophylaxis," with Gill's recent "Detention," includes historical photographs of onetime island residents with their hands and faces blotted out by microscopic reproductions of the bacteria. Again we see the shoreline, the hole in the ground, the empty cement bunker covered in graffiti, the blowing wild grass, as well as a rocky beach, tangled brush and trees and the view from the bow of a boat. The camera pans the landscape, repeatedly showing us cement steps to nowhere.



Don Gill, *D'Arcy Island: Untitled film stills*, 2006, matreflex mural. Photo: Don Gill.



Don Gill, *D'Arcy Island*, 2006, matteflex mural. Photo: Don Gill.

“experiments where criminals have been injected without contracting the virus” and “far from home and friends” wash over the listener. Other text includes a description of inhabitants, identified solely by their race (French Canadian, Russian Jew, Iclander, Chinese) and the progression of their illness, underscoring the striking link between race and contagions or disease.<sup>9</sup>

Perhaps the most powerful piece of the exhibition, “The Burrow,” is tucked around a corner, opposite “Prophylaxis” and “Detention.” Here a video displayed on a monitor set into a wall depicts stark, almost monochromatic tree limbs. The soundtrack is a male voice reading from Franz Kafka’s “The Burrow” (c. 1922) — an unfinished short story about a mole-like protagonist and the underground tunnels he has created over his lifetime — with the sound of wind chimes in the background. By using this story to narrate the work, Gill emphasizes the impulse for protection and refuge. The animal is guarding his warren from possible predators and feels susceptible to attack through a passageway he has left open. Although he could have covered up the entrance to ensure complete isolation, he realizes the need for a potential escape route. The voice on the soundtrack describes the uneasy, false calm he

feels residing in the inner chamber of a fortified den while the enemy may very well be digging towards him.

“The Burrow” is shown in close proximity to a large format photograph (50” x 80”) of a rough hole in the ground, one of many stills from the video and film footage that have been enlarged and hung as tarpaulins around the gallery space. The hole in the photograph replicates the burrow described in the video work, and the juxtaposition of the two makes a forceful impression. Here the complexity of the issues and emotions raised by *D'Arcy Island* hit home.

Gill’s work addresses institutionalized fear, racism and the historical and contemporary use of exile as a response to amor-



Don Gill, *D'Arcy Island: Aerial View*, 2006, matteflex mural.

phous anxieties and fear. We try to protect ourselves by endorsing the segregation of the criminal, the terrorist, the infected, while at the same time insulating ourselves, forming a collectivity by identifying enemies and threats. Gill’s *D'Arcy Island* underscores how the climate of fear in which we live is embedded in our social and political structures, largely unquestioned and contributing to a collective belief in threat — whether that takes the form of particular groups of people or disease. It reminds us that the illusion of safety achieved through isolation is accompanied by a paranoid obsessiveness akin to madness.

*Leila Armstrong is a writer and visual artist currently residing in Lethbridge, Alberta.*

#### Notes:

1. bc Parks - Darcy Island, Haro Stait. (2006). <http://www.britishcolumbia.com/parks/?id=425>
2. Bruce Ricketts. The Lepers of D'Arcy Island. (2006). [http://www.mysteriesofcanada.com/BC/lepers\\_of\\_d.htm](http://www.mysteriesofcanada.com/BC/lepers_of_d.htm)
3. Marion I. Helgesen. Heritage Sites. (n.d.). <http://www.metchosinmuseum.org/Contentpages/Heritage%20Sites/Quarantines.htm>
4. Musée Historique de Tracadie Inc. The Leprosy of Tracadie. (2003). [http://www.virtualmuseum.ca/pm.php?id=story\\_line&lg=English&f=&ex=00000254&sl=5008&pos=1](http://www.virtualmuseum.ca/pm.php?id=story_line&lg=English&f=&ex=00000254&sl=5008&pos=1)
5. Interview with the artist, 26 October, 2006.
6. *Ibid.*
7. The Library of Congress. Ansel Adams' Photographs of Japanese-American Internment at Manzanar. (n.d.). <http://memory.loc.gov/ammen/collections/anseladams/>
8. “The Lepers of D'Arcy Island,” *Dominion Medical Monthly*, XI, no. 6 (Victoria, BC, 1898).
9. The inhabitants of D'Arcy Island were all Chinese (with the exception of one anonymous Caucasian man). It is likely that the text is describing residents the lazaretto on Bentinck Island (1924 – 56), off William Head. Helgesen (n.d.).

## The Need for Vision: *Asia Pacific Triennial 5* (APT 5)

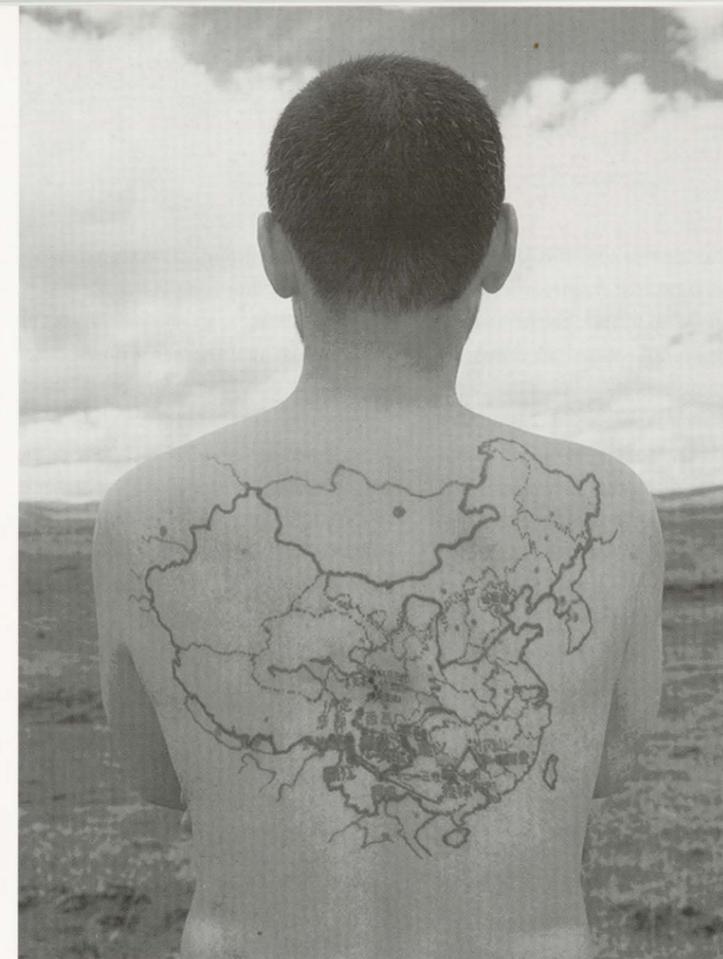
Queensland Art Gallery — Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane  
1 December, 2006 – 11 April, 2007

review by Haema Sivanesan

The Asia Pacific Triennial (APT) is a major contemporary art event focusing exclusively on the art of the Asia Pacific region. An innovative program of the Queensland Art Gallery (QAG) in Brisbane, Australia (a major state-funded museum), the first APT was held in 1993, with the aim of considering the influence and impact of Asian and Indigenous practices on the development of contemporary Australian art. The idea behind the event was to begin a process of cultivating cultural relations within the region, a move to begin shifting Australia’s cultural position from its traditionally Anglocentric orientation to reflect its geographic location. The APT was conceived of as an opportunity to explore notions of “cultural encounter and interaction in art,” and thereby take account of regional visual art practices.<sup>1</sup>



Wang Wenhai *Mao Zedong and Mao Zedong*, 2003, fibreglass sculptures. Courtesy: The Long March Project, Beijing.



Qin Ga, *The Miniature Long March* (detail), 2002 - 2005. Courtesy: The Long March Project, Beijing.

In 2006 – 2007, the fifth Asia Pacific Triennial (APT 5) was billed as “the only major exhibition in the world to focus exclusively on the contemporary art of Asia, Australia and the Pacific ... [being] distinguished from other international events by its collecting focus.”<sup>2</sup> This year’s exhibition featured 37 artists and two multi-artist projects from 16 countries. Seventy percent of the work would be acquired by QAG, distinguishing this museum as a premier institution for the collecting of contemporary works by artists of Asian backgrounds. QAG’s commitment to the presentation of contemporary Asian art is indisputable. But how does APT 5 explore possibilities in artistic encounter and exchange within the Asia-Pacific region? And what kind of engagement with the contemporary art of the Asia-

Pacific does an exhibition like the APT really afford?

In the manner of many international art events, works by artists from India, Thailand, Vietnam, China, New Zealand, Australia and the Pacific Islands were gathered together in a grand and eclectic display. There were bark paintings from northern Australia, textiles from the Pacific, miniature paintings from Pakistan and paper cut-outs from China, interspersed amongst video work from Vietnam and China, installation from New Zealand, India, and Thailand, and photographic works from Australia and Japan. Unfortunately, the viewer was not provided with a clear curatorial concept or framework to guide them through the exhibition.

Perhaps the idea behind this lack of an articulated curatorial framework was to not get caught up in the specificities and politics of cultural representation in order to present a democratic and inclusive conception of art from the region.<sup>3</sup> But many of the works selected for APT 5 were culturally specific in terms of their visual language, and cultural or art historical references. And as it stood, the exhibition read as a *mélange* of unrelated visual concepts, approaches and ideas. The juxtaposition of works often made for a jarring viewing experience and did a disservice to a great deal of the art included. Thus, despite the strength of the work of individual artists, the selection and display of works for APT 5 sit strangely and awkwardly together, and it is often difficult to define even superficial relationships between works or to discern a context for individual works. More problematically, I am nagged by the question of whether this project of collecting and displaying these art works in this way is any different to the 19th century project of collecting and amassing cultural objects as a means of asserting colonial power or authority.

For example, documentation from the Long March Project, China showcased some of the work produced by artists involved with this ongoing activist project. Conceived as a mobile and evolving, critically engaged

initiative, involving artists, writers, curators and theorists, The Long March Project is concerned with taking contemporary art to the people of rural China. The documentation of the Long March Project at APT 5 included Hong Hao's digital scans of everyday paraphernalia such as maps, postcards, pamphlets and other ephemera, comprising an insightful document on contemporary Chinese society; and Qin Ga's *The Miniature Long March* (2002 – 2005), a collection of videos and photographs documenting a series of tattoos that record on the artist's body, his journey along the route of the Long March. Drawing on an age-old folk tradition of paper cutting, Liu Jieqiong's *The Story of the Red Army* (2004) re-tells the story of the original Long March (1934 – 1935), which sowed the seeds of communism in China and was associated with the process of defining a Chinese nationalist identity. Incorporating a diverse range of art practices and conceptual approaches, The Long March Project is remarkable for the way it examines the cultural flows and processes shaping the definition, presentation and reception of art and culture in contemporary China.

In contrast to the eclecticism of the documentation of the Long March Project were Khadim Ali's exquisite and poignant miniature paintings, which contend with the destruction of the artist's ancestral

hometown of Bamiyan, Afghanistan by Taliban forces. Trained at the National College of Art Lahore, Pakistan, Ali's work draws on a range of historical Persian and Mughal sources as well as referencing imagery drawn from Western manuscripts. Ali's paintings combine rich colours, abstracted forms and metaphoric imagery with calligraphic elements to investigate notions of violence and destruction as well as explore the possibility of redemption. His work is representative of the vitality of miniature painting as a contemporary art form in Pakistan.

No less beguiling were Djambawa Marawili's bark paintings, which tell the important creation stories of the Madarrpa people of the Northwestern shores of the Gulf of Carpentaria in northern Australia. Combining representational elements (fish, crocodile, lizard) with geometric diamond-shaped patterns that are specific to his clan, Marawili's intricately painted barks are striking for their impressive scale, careful design and composition. The dense cross-hatching that is distinctive to Marawili's work lends his paintings an impressive vibrancy. Marawili's practice originates from a tradition that only developed in this aboriginal community in the 1950s. Yet despite their modern origins, the pictorial content of these paintings remain largely obscure to the uninitiated, in keeping with the customary protocols of the community to which Marawili belongs. The implications of this type of work for contemporary practices of painting, is yet to be fully explored.

Different again is a body of work by New Zealand artist, Michael Parekowhai, whose large-scale installations are typically concerned with concepts of appropriation and re-appropriation, referencing the

work of New Zealand's most important modernist painters, including Colin McMahon (1919 – 1987) and Gordon Walters (1919 – 1995). Drawing on a post-modern wit and refined if playful aesthetic, Parekowhai considers the role and place of Maori culture within the non-indigenous (pakeha) mainstream. His work investigates the mechanisms and processes of cultural colonization, bringing important political and conceptual concerns to the consideration of art being produced in the region. However, the placement of his work as a discrete grouping within the exhibition does not allow for these themes to be considered more broadly, in terms of its implications for the work of other artists included in the exhibition.

Perhaps it is relevant to note that APT 5 was curated entirely in-house, without the curatorium of specialists that have advised on the selection of work in previous years. It is perhaps because I am aware of this that this year's APT appears to me as a display of new acquisitions, reflecting diverse departmental collecting interests within the museum. The eclectic range and diversity of visual material is a strength in terms of the collection mandate of QAG, but as an exhibition, APT 5 lacks curatorial logic or a coherent purpose.

As it stands, the exhibition affords little exploration of the ideas of cultural interaction or encounter, and the lack of curatorial explanation begs the viewer to question the significance and relevance of such a diverse and eclectic collection of works. For sure, many of the works in the exhibition challenge us to consider alternative art histories and visual and aesthetic codes. These works have the potential to extend western visual art

vocabularies and shift conventionally accepted paradigms in contemporary art. It has the capacity to broaden notions of what might constitute an "international avant-garde". However, this potential is not effectively explored on this occasion. Instead a major concern is to demonstrate the accessibility of the art for mainstream audiences. As a result, the exhibition relies heavily on novelty and spectacle for its power. For example, Ai Weiwei's three-metre-tall crystal chandelier, *Boomerang* (2006), can only be described as pure art bling; while Kwon Ki Soo's paintings are colourful but banal; Rashid Rana's Internet-generated photomontages are ambitious but rely too much on a simplistic exploration of new media technologies. Indeed, in APT 5 the films of Jackie Chan have been elevated to the status of contemporary visual art.

These gestures to populist appeal and mainstream accessibility are becoming increasingly important in the Australian context, where museums and galleries are being called upon to justify their relevance in terms of audience attendance. This is to the denigration of the larger value of the APT as it was originally conceived — as a radical, challenging and groundbreaking event that disrupted the dominant contemporary art discourse by taking account of regional and non-western practices and concerns.

I would suggest that the prioritization of public appeal over curatorial vision is indicative of a two-fold anxiety regarding firstly, the relevance of art in the broader context of contemporary Australian culture; and secondly, the presentation of work that is ultimately "foreign." These twin anxieties are deeply revealing, and suggest the tentativeness and trepidation

with which Australia is forging its cultural identity, particularly with regard to its relationship to and place in the region. On the one hand, the reasons for this trepidation are political and reflect Australia's difficult position as a non-Asian nation. On the other, the lack of commitment to an overarching curatorial vision also suggests a lack of in-depth knowledge of contemporary practices in the region.

Nevertheless, I want the APT to be a bold reflection on the dynamic state of contemporary culture within the Asia-Pacific. I want it to reflect the vitality of Australia's engagement with, and understanding of, the region. From both cultural and political perspectives, it is important that QAG continue to take even awkward, ungainly steps towards forging Australia's relationship to the region. But until Australia truly is dynamically engaged and confident of its relationship to its regional neighbours, it is unlikely that the APT can radicalize its position.

*Haema Sivanesan is the Executive Director of SAVAC (South Asian Visual Arts Collective), Toronto. She was previously the Assistant Curator of Asian Art at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia and has curated several independent projects, including an exhibition of new art from South Asia and its diaspora for the Commonwealth Games Cultural Festival in Melbourne, Australia 2006.*

#### Notes:

1. Wang Gungwu, "Forward", *Tradition and Change: Contemporary Art of Asia and the Pacific*, Caroline Turner, ed., (Brisbane: Queensland Art Gallery, 1993), p.v.
2. Media release, 21 September, 2006 [http://asiapacifictrienial.com/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0003/30954/apt\\_artist\\_announcement\\_release.pdf](http://asiapacifictrienial.com/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/30954/apt_artist_announcement_release.pdf). Accessed on 28 November, 2006.
3. The catalogue offers little by way of clarification on the curatorial ideas informing the exhibition. It does not include a curatorial essay, but a forward written by QAG's Director and four essays examining aspects of the exhibition.



eX de Medici. *The theory of everything*, 2005. Courtesy: Queensland Art Gallery.

**Ongoing Project:**  
*Tropicália: A Revolution  
in Brazilian Culture  
(1967 – 1972)*

Curated by Carlos Basualdo  
Bronx Museum of the Arts  
7 October, 2006 – 28 January, 2007

review by Jacob Korczynski



Hélio Oiticica *Tropicália* 1967, Installation view. Courtesy The Bronx Museum of the Arts Photo: Bill Orcutt.

In *Tropicália: A Revolution in Brazilian Culture* not only has curator Carlos Basualdo adeptly outlined the ideas and brief history of Tropicália for an audience unfamiliar with the Brazilian context, he has also opened the Bronx Museum to the ongoing effects of Tropicália through a curatorial strategy that physically and metaphorically links the past to the present. The exhibition was composed of two primary categories of work: original and reconstructed historical projects and new work that responds to the precepts of Tropicália and looks beyond Brazil for its international manifestations. Here Tropicália has become not merely a challenge to the socio-political fabric of Brazil in a certain era but also, through its reproducible and participatory aspects, a challenge to the nature of the museum itself.

As the culmination of a post-colonial counterculture, Tropicália was a response to both an increasingly oppressive military dictatorship and the condition of a nation as doubly inscribed with the imposition of imported international culture and a complex intersection of aboriginal, African and European heritage. An interdisciplinary project that encompassed architecture, film, music, theatre and visual art, the Tropicálistas endeavoured to blur the boundaries between avant-garde and pop-

ular forms through strategies that foregrounded cultural hybridity and invited interactivity.

As curated by Basualdo, the exhibition foregrounds two strategies that informed artistic practice during that era. In a search to articulate a Brazilian national identity in the late 1960s, the Tropicálistas looked to the writings of Oswald de Andrade for an analysis of the post-colonial condition, turning to his concept of "cultural cannibalism" from his 1928 *Manifesto Antropófago (Cannibal Manifesto)*. In that manifesto, de Andrade argues that as a colonized nation under the influence of outside cultures, Brazil's "cannibalization" or appropriation and reprocessing of foreign cultures, is a natural localized response to the country's historical and contemporary conditions and a way to assert its resistance to colonialist domination. A project based on strategies of appropriation, the Tropicálistas were well aware of the possibility of their own co-option and assimilation.

It was artist and theorist Hélio Oiticica's 1967 installation that provided a name for Tropicália's interdisciplinary aesthetic and political project. For Oiticica, one strategy of resistance to co-option arose from the "supra-sensorial," the corporeal experi-

ence of a work and the invitation of a transformative process beyond the surface image, radicalizing the traditional realm of viewership into an immersive social structure. Oiticica cited the supra-sensorial as a way for Tropicália to avoid being commercially absorbed and it remains a relevant strategy that Tropicália retains in relation to the museum as well. Within the exhibition, the interactive invitation of the supra-sensorial becomes a response to site-specificity, and here, in the heart of the Bronx, a new concept, emerges: the museum as probject. A term coined by Rogério Duarte, a writer, graphic designer and colleague of Oiticica, as well as the leading Tropicália musicians Gilberto Gil and Caetano Veloso, "...probjects would be like objects 'without formulation', not like completed works, but rather open structures or structures created through participation."<sup>1</sup>

Hélio Oiticica's installation *Tropicália*, 1967, is aptly situated at the very centre of the exhibition. In the artist's words, this work was "... the first conscious, objective attempt to impose an obviously Brazilian image upon the current context of the avant-garde and national art manifestations in general."<sup>2</sup> In *Tropicália* sand covers the museum floor and serves as the base for an environment that viewers are

invited to enter and explore, including caged parrots, potted tropical plants and a series labyrinth-like frame and fabric structures. After being adopted by Caetano Veloso as the title one of his songs and the name of *Tropicália: ou Panis et Circenses*, the 1968 compilation of music by the musicians of the movement, including Veloso, Gil, Gal Costa, Tom Zé and Os Mutantes, the term Tropicália entered the Brazilian vernacular. Oiticica's installation foregrounds its impermanence and malleability, echoing the transience of the favela structures it evokes. *Tropicália's* caged parrots and the sand that acts as the structure's unstable base, both reference colonialist tropes of Brazil as open and exotic. Yet these elements have been cannibalized and reprocessed by Oiticica to also signify repression and denote the shifting site occupied by the individual. Entering one structure leads into a series of darkened corridors, which eventually turn to a flickering light at their centre where a

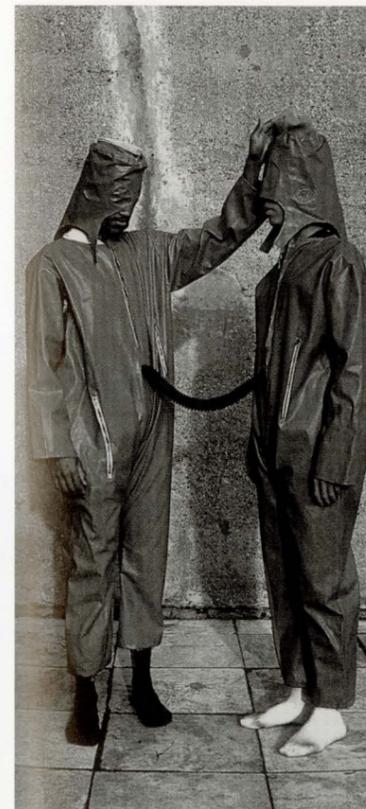
television plays the local signal at a continuous drone. Here, we find contemporary events projected at the heart of *Tropicália*: not the scenes of growing police repression, psychedelia and Vietnam war reportage informing Oiticica's production and broadcast in Brazil in 1967, but the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, hip-hop and Iraq war reportage informing the museum viewer and transmitted across America in 2007. Here the reconstructed Oiticica installation provides an opening for the presence of the contemporary outside world to bear upon both his project and the rest of the exhibition.

The immersive supra-sensorial experience continues in a nearby gallery that displays reconstructed works by Lygia Clark. Antithetical to the conventionally static condition of the museum and in particular the vitrined vacuum of historical survey exhibitions, Clark's works invite viewers to activate them, or immerse themselves within them. *Caesarian: Cloth-Body-Cloth Series*, 1967/2005, is a full-body suit that the viewer is invited to wear in order to simulate pregnancy: the plastic coveralls include a pink rubber pocket located over the belly. It contains small pieces of foam, which the participant can scatter. With *Caesarian: Cloth-Body-Cloth Series*, the experience of otherness in the colonial context, in which effects are imposed from outside, is extended by Clark to the otherness of gender, a response, perhaps, to how she was circumscribed within the male-dominated Tropicália project. Underscoring the desire of the artists to simultaneously build and destroy Tropicália so as to not produce a single, monolithic movement, Clark's invitation in *Caesarian: Cloth-Body-Cloth* to scatter the pieces of foam from the belly of the suit to the surrounding space

echoes the dissemination of Tropicália through cultural hybridity. Additionally, it might signify the eventual expulsion of both Gilberto Gil and Caetano Veloso from Brazil and the simultaneous dispersal of other Tropicálistas abroad, including Hélio Oiticica and filmmaker Glauber Rocha.

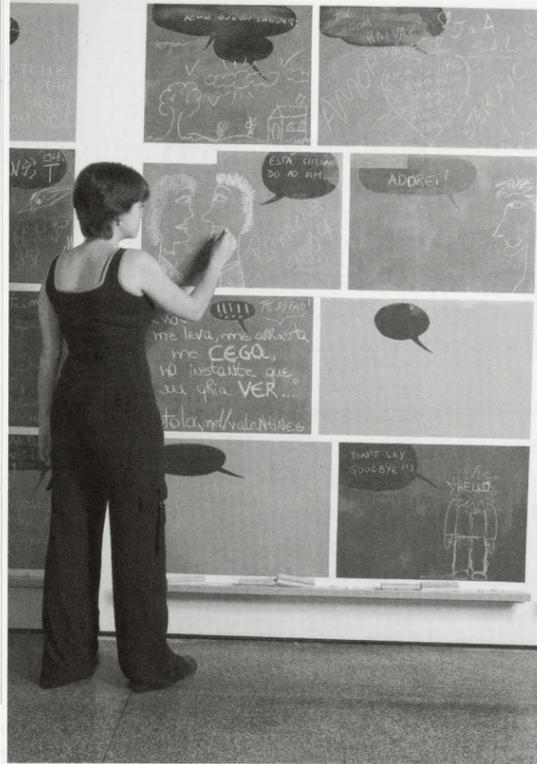
With Rivane Neuenschwander's *Zé Carioca and Friends*, 2004, one of the contemporary projects presented in the exhibition, the potential transformation of the viewer into an active participant continues. By painting over the figures in an original comic strip and rendering the speech bubbles blank, Neuenschwander transforms the narratives featuring the cartoon parrot Joe from Rio into a series of abstract forms, comprised of a grid painted in enamel. A character created by Walt Disney in the 1940s, Joe from Rio eventually replaced Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck in the Brazilian market. Instead of presenting Brazil's colonialist narratives, as the original comic did, the work erases Joe from Rio and leaves only the spaces of the speech bubbles, inviting viewers to insert their own thoughts into the cartoon sequence. The erasure of the original figure produced by Walt Disney along with the empty cartoon speech bubbles opens a space for entry, both for the artist returning to a familiar and widely recognized figure and for the viewer to assert their own voice through the presence of the chalk and chalkboard erasers. Neuenschwander's project expresses Tropicália's efforts to dissolve the boundaries between avant-garde and pop, high and low culture, in order to blur the boundaries between reaction and reception.

The exhibition's final gallery is filled with archival documents and film clips contex-



Lygia Clark, *The I and the You*, from the series "Cloth-Body-Cloth," 1967. Photo: "The World of Lygia Clark" Courtesy: Cultural Association, Rio de Janeiro.

Rivane Neuenschwander, *Zé Carioca and Friends no. 12* (The Abduction of the Maiden), 2004. Courtesy: Galeria Fortes Vilaça, São Paulo; Stephen Friedman Gallery, London



In the decade following the initial wave of Tropicália, another form of cultural hybridity emerged here in the Bronx. Like the Tropicálistas who emerged from the margins before influencing Brazilian popular culture, thirty years later, hip-hop has come to define contemporary popular culture in the us with a global presence. Based on the Jamaican cultural tradition of the soundsystem, after developing in the African-American and Hispanic borough, hip-hop along the way merged with New York's downtown art and punk scenes. Forging a space by illegally occupying schoolyards, parks and streets, the soundsystem structure allowed a dj to mix sounds that were old and new, local and global, reprocessing an archive of extant material into new aural structures, another form of cultural hybridity. At this time in history, as America's culture industry grows alongside the violence and repression of its global-economic dominance, we once again look back at such margins in the Bronx and await the mutation and formulation of the many Tropicálias to come.

tualizing Tropicália. These at first appear to offer a summary or conclusion. But closure is denied through the implications of the final work in the exhibition, Hélio Oiticica's *Seja Marginal, Seja Herói*, 1967. This work consists of a flag bearing a slogan that roughly translates as "Be an Outlaw, Be a Hero." Just above the slogan is the silhouette of the bullet-ridden corpse of Cara de Cavalo, a criminal folk-hero and friend of Oiticica's from the favelas of Rio de Janeiro who was killed by the police. *Seja Marginal, Seja Herói* was used as the backdrop for a series of concerts presented by Tropicália musicians at the Sucata nightclub in Rio in late 1968. The first open conflicts between the Tropicálistas and government authorities took place at these concerts, eventually leading to the imprisonment and exile of both Gilberto Gil and Caetano Veloso. While their exile marked the end of the movement in Brazil, it was just the beginning for Tropicália's global reverberations.



Lygia Clark, *The I and the You*, from the series "Cloth-Body-Cloth," 1967. Photo: "The World of Lygia Clark" Cultural Association, Rio de Janeiro.

Thank you to Annette Hurtig for the conversation and consultation which, assisted in the development of this review.

Jacob Korczynski is an independent curator based in Toronto and a member of the Pleasure Dome programming collective. He has curated projects for the Art Gallery of York University and the Dunlop Art Gallery, and is currently developing the first Canadian survey of the single-channel videos of Raphael Montañez Ortiz for saw Gallery's upcoming Art Star 3 Video Art Biennial.

Notes:

1. Carlos Basualdo. "Tropicália: Avant-Garde, Popular Culture, and the Culture Industry in Brazil" in *Tropicália: A Revolution in Brazilian Culture (1967-1972)* (Sao Paulo: Cosac Naify, 2005), p.20.
2. Hélio Oiticica. "Tropicália" in *Tropicália: A Revolution in Brazilian Culture (1967-1972)* (Sao Paulo: Cosac Naify, 2005), p.239.

A SPACE GALLERY

On Migration

Brendan Fernandes, Mona Kamal  
September 6 – October 12, 2007

Resilience – Re/creation:  
Lost & Found

Rebecca Baird, Peter Morin, Jude Norris & Arthur Renwick  
Curated by Michelle LaVallee  
A Space Gallery (Suite 110)  
October 19 – November 23, 2007

Resistance – Realities:  
Block & Board

Tania Willard, Angela Sterritt & Luke Parnell  
Curated by Michelle LaVallee  
Open Studio Gallery (Suite 104)  
October 4 – October 27, 2007

Joint Opening Reception with  
Resilience - Re/creation: Lost & Found  
on Friday October 19th, 2007

401 RICHMOND STREET WEST . SUITE 110  
TORONTO . ONTARIO . M5V 3A8 . 416-979-9633  
INFO@ASPACEGALLERY.ORG WWW.ASPACEGALLERY.ORG

A Space Gallery gratefully acknowledges the support of our members and project partners as well as the Canada Council for the Arts, the Ontario Arts Council and the Toronto Arts Council.



DUNLOP  
ART  
GALLERY

REGINA PUBLIC LIBRARY, 2311 12TH AVENUE  
REGINA, SASKATCHEWAN S4P 3Z5  
TEL 306.1.777.6040 FAX 306.1.949.7264  
WWW.DUNLOPARTGALLERY.ORG



THE CANADA COUNCIL FOR THE ARTS  
LE CONSEIL DES ARTS DU CANADA  
SINCE 1957

Dunlop Art Gallery  
CENTRAL GALLERY

Sylvie Blocher: Living Pictures  
Adjunct Curator Annette Hurtig  
Organized by Dunlop Art Gallery  
JULY 12 TO AUGUST 29, 2007

Time and Space  
Curator Josephine Mills  
Organized by University of Lethbridge Art Gallery  
SEPTEMBER 7 TO NOVEMBER 11, 2007

SHERWOOD VILLAGE GALLERY

Sylvie Blocher:  
Living Pictures/Je & Nous  
Adjunct Curator Annette Hurtig  
Organized by Dunlop Art Gallery  
JUNE 9 TO JULY 16, 2007

Napachie Pootoogook  
Curators Leslie Boyd Ryan & Darlene Coward Wight  
Circulated by Winnipeg Art Gallery  
JULY 20 TO SEPTEMBER 9, 2007

MILLER BRITTAIN

When the Stars Threw Down Their Spears

April 29 – September 16, 2007



Organized and circulated by the Beaverbrook Art Gallery  
703 Queen Street | Fredericton, NB E3B 5A6 | 506.458.8545  
www.beaverbrookartgallery.org



Print Media Sponsor in New Brunswick TELEGRAPH JOURNAL

This project has been made possible in part through a contribution from the Museums Assistance Program, Department of Canadian Heritage. Exhibition catalogue available.

# Not So Far From Home

shortFuse by Brenda Goldstein

On the Evening of 11 April 2007, a Goethe-Institut audience listened as a tearful Deputy Director Doina Popescu introduced the evening by reading a press release indicating that after 35 years, the Goethe-Institut would be changing its "mode of operation." Those gathered for the Images Festival panel were shocked to learn that the Institut would be divesting itself of its ground floor gallery and library as well as the theatre that houses a grand piano and two 35mm projectors.

"We will spend more money on joint Canadian-German cultural projects and less on infrastructure," says Director Dr. Arpad Sölter in the Institut's press release — in lieu of the Institut's exhibition space, it promises more cooperation with local Canadian partner institutions and their venues. The message underlying the corporate cost-cutting is that Toronto has enough galleries and theatres; we can live without one more.

"We must do what we do in a more effective way," Dr. Sölter told the Globe and Mail, "I'm here to bring Canadians German

cultural experiences, not to operate a movie theatre."

It was ironic to hear the announcement at an event made possible by just the kind of partnership that Dr. Sölter would like to see more of. With the majority of Toronto's repertory cinemas having closed their doors in 2006, the Goethe was one of a few remaining independent venues capable of showing a variety of screening formats. The announcement left a question dangling in the air — where exactly will all of these partnerships take place?

In a city where intensification is the rule and real estate a precious commodity, culture is often left homeless. While it may be true that the organizations themselves remain, when we lose the physical spaces, the stability and permanence that venues provide also disappears. Exhibition becomes more competitive — screenings and talks have to fight for space next to whatever the trends dictate — making culture transient, impermanent and increasingly subject to market forces. Once again we are forced into a debate framed by the demand that culture justify its existence by virtue of the bottom line, the terms of which insinuate that spending on culture does not offer a return on investment, and therefore holds no value.

But perhaps the Goethe-Institut is acting in accordance with another set of facts — it is our government that sets the tone when it comes to international diplomacy and cultural promotion and the Goethe-Institut seems to be following the Tories' example. Claiming the need to streamline its operations, Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs announced cuts to its budget last September:

"With the funds remaining, the depart-

ment plans to pursue a more targeted and strategic approach, including cultural promotion more closely aligned to our foreign policy and trade objectives."

At the beginning of April, DFAIT's cuts to "public diplomacy" came into effect, reducing the budget to \$0. These funds had been used to send Canadian artists, writers, musicians and productions around the world. It is hard to argue for cultural exchange when it has become so obviously one-sided.

England, Germany, France and Italy all spend about \$1-billion on cultural diplomacy, annually. But these are countries whose representatives see themselves as advocates for their country's art and heritage.

This has been a bad year for Canadian arts funding. The Goethe will be the second major institution that we lose this year; Parachute stopped their presses last November. The promised Canada Council supplementary funds, which forced arts organizations into an additional laborious grant writing exercise with the pledge of much-needed money for capital projects, left most organizations with a fraction of what they asked for, the lion's share going to already well-endowed institutions.

In 2005, Italy's Culture Minister took a stand against his own government in the ongoing debate about the sweeping budget cuts proposed for the country's arts community. Minister Rocco Buttiglione threatened to resign if Premier Silvio Berlusconi did not scrap proposed arts cuts.

Perhaps Minister of Foreign Affairs Peter McKay and Minister of Canadian Heritage and Status of Women Bev Oda should meditate on his actions.

# SHAPE SHIFTERS.

David Diviney

Here to Yonder, July 13 - August 25

Jean-Denis Boudreau

Sofa-Tetes & Instructions, August 10 - September 8

Tricia Middleton

Ether Frolics, September 14 - October 27

Third Space Gallery  
42 Princess Street  
Saint John NB E2L 1K2  
www.thirdspacegallery.ca

\*next deadline for submissions is August 15\*

third space  
tiers espace

New  Nouveau  
Brunswick

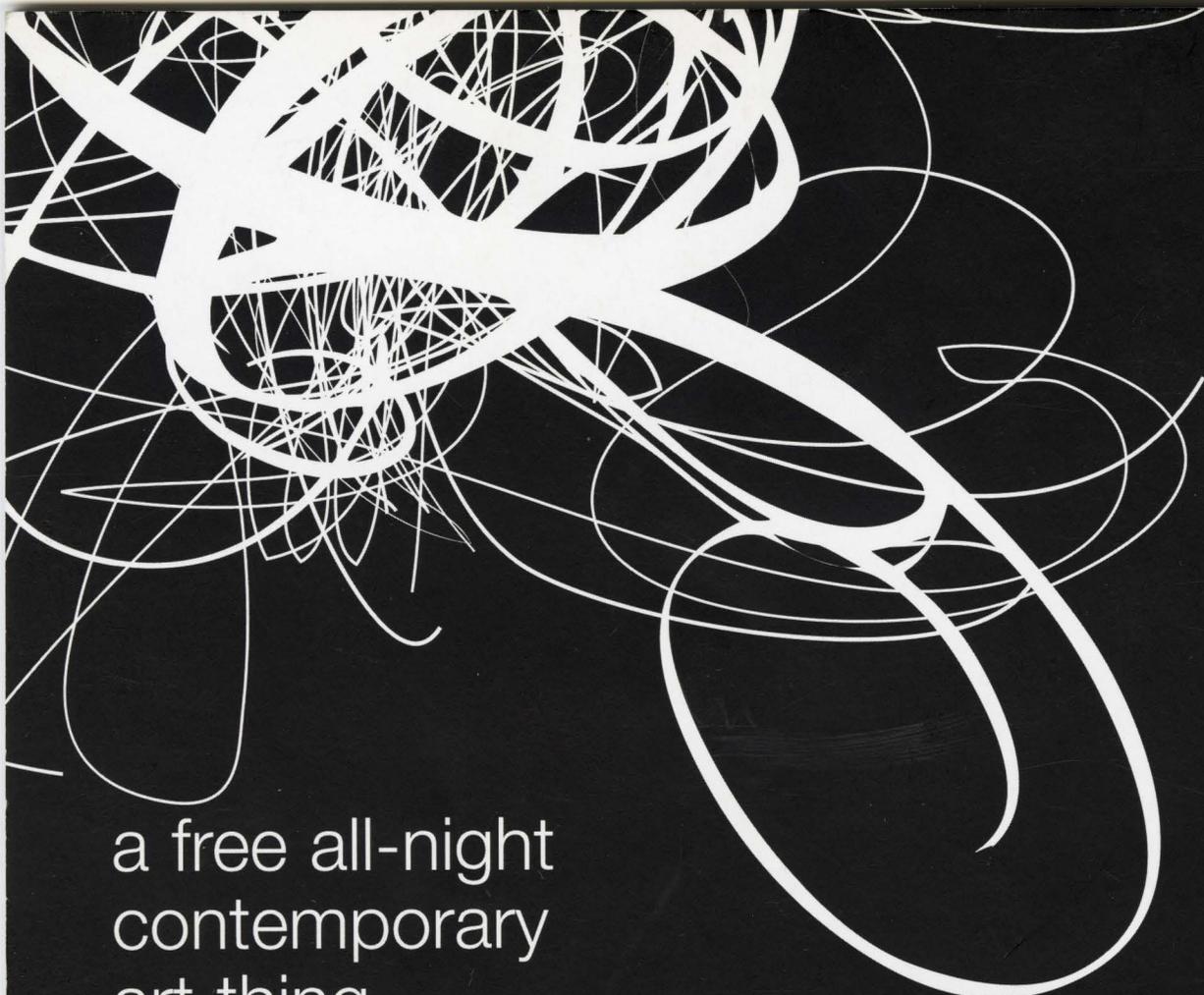
PICAROONS  
Traditional Ales

T4G

The Intelligent Application of Technology™

TELEGRAPH JOURNAL





# scotiabank nuit blanche

a free all-night  
contemporary  
art thing

September 29, 2007  
7:03pm to sunrise  
[scotiabanknuitblanche.ca](http://scotiabanknuitblanche.ca)  
416-338-0338

For one sleepless night experience  
Toronto transformed by artists.

Discover art in galleries, museums and unexpected places.  
From alleyways and demolition sites to churches and  
squash courts, explore more than 195 destinations.

One night only. All night long.

 Scotiabank®

 BLOOR  
YORKVILLE

Produced by  
 TORONTO