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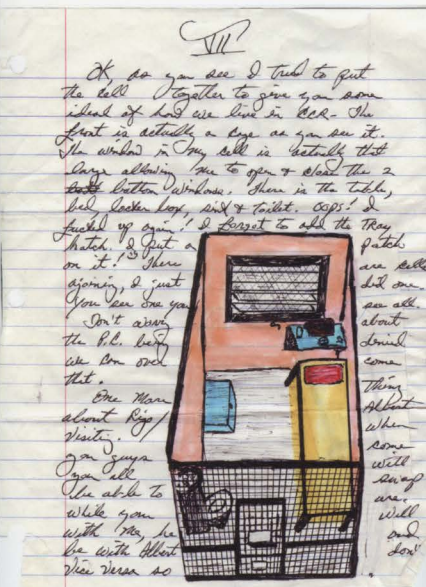
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EDITORIAL

ABOLITION

To strive for abolition is to cast off of the ghastly everyday violence that imprisons, enslaves and kills us, our mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, neighbours, comrades, friends, lovers. [1] It is to acknowledge that under the current regime, social justice can't be accomplished by simply extending privileges, one niche market at a time, until we are all equally free to choose between one bleak life sentence or another. To call for abolition is to summon the complete overturning of society; it means placing all bets on a future that can scarcely be imagined. As a rhetorical act alone, calling for the abolition of social lynchpins such as criminal justice, colonialism or the gender division demands that their utter corruption is recognized, and bares the immensity of the task of organizing to live otherwise. In practice, it links seemingly disparate struggles because they use a similar logic to structure their attacks on different parts of a giant beast. In this issue of *FUSE*, the thematic of abolition will be fleshed out through an eclectic collection of case studies and histories, all of which are characterized by their insistence on addressing exploitation holistically.

An enlivening tendency of contemporary feminism focuses on the abolition of patriarchy (or gender, the relation that structures exploitation within it). Recent calls to abolish gender first emerged from the French

ultra-left, in particular the group *Théorie Communiste*, and are justified by the claim that the gender contradiction plays a structural role within capitalism. Gender abolition is thus positioned as essential to the dismantling of capitalism. A loosely structured group of US feminists has been crucial in extending the call to abolish gender, incorporating commitments to anti-racist, queer and Trans* positive feminist politics. The text "On the Abolition of Gender," [2] penned by the collective author *Folie à Deux*, provides the contours of a contemporary revolutionary position that sees gender, along with race, as an inherent element of the capitalist mode of production. [3] Taken as a theoretical tonic for the projects, practices and issues described elsewhere in the magazine, this essay suggests a connective tissue linking seemingly disparate instances of oppression and resistance.

For a case study of legislative genocide targeting Indigenous women in Canada, we can turn to "Forcing Our Hearts," [4] by Pamela Palmater, who is currently running for National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations. Beginning with the knowledge that the underlying objective of colonial laws and policies is to eliminate Indigenous people over time, Palmater demonstrates how amendments to colonial legislation tend to simply re-organize oppression rather than alleviate it. Rather, it is the colonial agenda itself that must be abolished through an honouring of Indigenous sovereignty. Offering another case study in the Canadian context, Robyn Maynard's "Carceral Feminism" [5] exposes the false feminism of sex work prohibitionists, showing how their work has failed to abolish violence against sex workers in Canada, instead harming them and putting them behind bars.

Perhaps the most prominent among contemporary abolitionisms is the prison abolition movement, a continuation of popular initiatives to abolish slavery. Prison abolitionists advance a devastating critique of the criminal justice system incorporating a sophisticated analysis of racialized oppression, arguing that structural racism and the prison industrial complex are both central to the operation of capitalism. This issue features two artists who labour with and for prisoners, Jackie Sumell and Mabel Negrete. "Living In a Place with No Prisons,"

[1] A disproportionate number of whom are racialized, Indigenous, Trans*, queer differently abled and/or poor.

[2] Page 12.

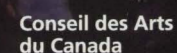
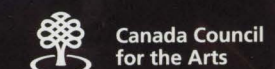
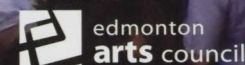
[3] Further aspects of this materialist feminist tendency are currently being developed for the forthcoming journal *LIES*, whose inaugural issue is due out in late summer 2012. *FUSE* editors are immensely grateful for their exchanges with *LIES* editors during the production of this issue.

[4] Page 4.

[5] Page 28.

SUMMER 2012 AT EDMONTON ARTIST-RUN CENTRES

Image: the Latitude 53 Rooftop Patio



[6] by researcher, film curator and prison abolitionist Nasrin Himada, reflects on the long-term collaborative work of Sumell and Herman Wallace. Sumell has dedicated the last decade of her artistic career to the production of an enormous campaign to support Wallace, one of the Angola 3, and get him out of prison. In the photographs of the Counter Narrative Society's performance in the fields facing the Corcoran State Prison in California, [7] the twisting of Mabel Negrete's body inside an industrial grey fabric replica of a prison cell creates a ghostly agonized figure suggesting the twinned imprisonment of inmates and their loved ones on the outside.

The various abolitionisms featured in this issue are united by an incisive understanding of exploitation borne by the force of lived experience, but it is their obstinacy and fervor that makes them truly compelling, and that gives them a unique contour in the landscape of political positions.

Stay posted for our next issue's spotlight on Lithuania, the continuation in our States of Postcoloniality series. Interviews with Ange Bagdziunaite of the Zeimiai Manor House and artist team Gediminas and Nomedas Urbonas will introduce readers to the ways that a post-Soviet leftist politic is being taken up by contemporary Lithuanian cultural producers. Marc Andre Léger's dialogue with Barbara Clausen and Michael Blum

regarding Alexandre Kluge's *News From Ideological Antiquity. Marx – Eisenstein – Das Kapital* will lend theoretical context. This August, we'll be kicking off a series of art-critical podcasts by Reena Katz, the first of which reflects on *9 Pieces from a Nation at War* (2007) by Andrea Geyer, Sharon Hayes, Ashley Hunt, Katya Sander, and David Thorne, on view at the MoMA until 6 August 2012. In the meantime, check out our new resources on fusemagazine.org, including full bibliographies for articles in the Abolition issue, as well as blog posts by intern Julia Borowicz on *FUSE's* feminist legacy.

Gina Badger
with the FUSE Editorial Committee

FUSE MAGAZINE 35-3 / Abolition / Summer 2012

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May Day 2012,
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Image courtesy of
Basha Smolen

FORCING OUR HEARTS

— Legislative Oppression of Indigenous Women in Canada

Pamela Palmater

Since time immemorial, the Indigenous Nations on Turtle Island (what is now known as Canada), have lived as sovereign Nations, with their own sophisticated governments, political systems, complex legal regimes, trading networks and economies, well-trained militaries, defended territories, rich cultural traditions, customs and practices, as well as unique worldviews and belief systems. Indigenous governance systems were varied across Turtle Island and leadership roles took a variety of forms, including sachems, sagamaws, elders, hereditary leaders, leaders of clans and houses, and councils of elders. These Nations had powerful male and female leaders, negotiators, politicians, strategists and traders. Their traditional Indigenous laws, theories and legal traditions had been refined over time and

worked well for thousands of years for their Nations and local communities, clans, houses and districts. These systems were not extinguished upon the assertion of Canadian sovereignty over Indigenous territories and thus remain at the core of Indigenous governance today.

The specific roles of Indigenous women varied depending on the specific Indigenous Nations, whether they be Cree, Mi'kmaq or Maliseet. But in general, "men and women were equal in power and each had autonomy in their own lives." [1] In addition to raising children and passing on their cultures and languages, Indigenous women were also involved at the political level. Depending on the specific Nation, Indigenous women not only selected their leaders, but they also helped control access to territories and had equal influence within their Nations' political affairs. It is therefore no surprise that Indigenous women were central in core creation myths and are represented as equals in traditional teachings.

However, colonization in Canada and the state's corresponding laws and policies relating to Indigenous peoples, lands and resources have wreaked havoc on Indigenous peoples and Nations—physically, socially, culturally, politically and spiritually. The underlying policy objective was to eliminate Indigenous peoples over time. [2] This would not only ensure access to Indigenous lands and resources for settlement, but would also reduce the Crown's financial, treaty and other obligations to the Indigenous peoples. Early laws divided traditional Indigenous Nations into hundreds of tiny reserves, made it illegal for lawyers to assist Indians in their claims against the state, outlawed cultural practices and instituted gender discriminatory rules for determining who was and was not an Indian. [3]

The *Indian Act* defined Indigenous peoples as "Indians" with criteria that specifically excluded Indigenous women and their children, as well as the female children of Indian men. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) also created a governance system which excluded and oppressed Indigenous women and placed them in an unequal position vis-à-vis their male counterparts. INAC incorporated specific criteria into the *Indian Act* to decide who is and is not an Indian based on outdated racist notions of blood quantum that originate with the pseudo-science of eugenics. These rules were also combined with gender-specific exclusions that specifically targeted Indigenous women for exclusion. This left many generations of Indigenous women and their children outside of the protection of their communities and Nations. While the *Indian Act* is the worst example of federally imposed colonial legislation that will lead to the legislative extinction of Indigenous peoples, it is also the federally controlled access point for the necessities of life for many Indigenous peoples.

INAC has tied law, policy and finances to concepts of Indianness, first tying it to male blood and then to resources. Thus, in order to live on one's home reserve, or access vital housing, education or health programs, one must be registered as an "Indian." Up

until 1985, all Indigenous peoples required Indian status to be members of their band (First Nation) and without it one could not (practically speaking) access elders, language speakers or cultural ceremonies and practices. Genocidal policies and programs such as residential schools, scalping laws and forced sterilization all disproportionately targeted Indigenous women, and INAC's legislative policies are no exception.

Since the 1800s, Indigenous women have been vulnerable to having their Indian status removed for being born as an illegitimate child or for marrying a non-Indian. For many generations, Indigenous women and their children were forced to move off reserve. These discriminatory provisions were first challenged by Jeannette Corbiere-Lavell of Wikwemikong and Yvonne Bedard of Six Nations. Both of these Indigenous women were born and raised in their respective communities but had their federally recognized Indian identities taken from them when they married non-Indians, as per section 12(1)(b) of the *Indian Act*. Despite section 1(b) of the *Canadian Bill of Rights* which protects equality rights, the Supreme Court of Canada decided against these women, holding that the *Canadian Bill of Rights* was never intended to impact Canada's jurisdiction in section 91(24) of the *Constitution Act, 1867* regarding "Indians and lands reserved for the Indians."

It was therefore left to Sandra Lovelace (now Senator Lovelace Nicholas) from Tobique First Nation to take the issue to the United Nations Human Rights Committee, where they held that Canada was in breach of Article 27 of the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* when it removed Lovelace's Indian registration and thus prevented her from enjoying her culture in community with the other members of her First Nation. Although Canada enacted *Bill C-31* in 1985 to amend the offending *Indian Act* registration provisions, it did not remove all gender discrimination, and in fact created new forms of it. The descendants of Indian women who married out now had lesser or no status as compared to the descendants of Indian men who married out. This was made all the worse by the fact that Canada refused to compensate women and children who had been wrongfully excluded from their communities.

This ongoing legislative nightmare forced Sharon McIvor to litigate against Canada to once and for all address the gender discrimination in the *Indian Act*. Her case resulted in two partial wins at the trial and appeal levels, but the Supreme Court refused to hear her case. The result was that Canada enacted the *Bill C-3* amendments to the *Indian Act* in 2011, which, like *Bill C-31* did not fully remedy gender inequality, but created new forms of discrimination and specifically barred Indigenous women and their descendants from due compensation. As a result, McIvor has taken her case to the United Nations. There are approximately 15 more cases working their way through the courts to challenge other discriminatory aspects of the registration provisions, and this does not even include the INAC policies that directly target Indigenous women (like unstated paternity rules) that are well outside the legislative authority of the *Indian Act*.

While all of these juridical processes play out, a whole suite of legislative amendments and proposed acts

are being introduced by the Conservative government, which are not only being imposed on First Nations against their collective will, but which will disproportionately impact Indigenous women. Three bills directly relating to Indigenous peoples are currently before either the House or the Senate: *Bill S-2, Family Homes on Reserves and Matrimonial Interests or Rights Act*; *Bill C-27, First Nations Financial Transparency Act*; and *Bill S-6, First Nations Elections Act*. The Conservative government has also indicated that it will reintroduce *Bill S-11, The Safe Drinking Water for First Nations Act* and introduce for the first time a *First Nations Education Act* and a *First Nations Property Ownership Act*. While all of them have relatively benign titles, from the details of each bill it is obvious that Canada is not only maintaining its vice-like grip on First Nations, but will continue to sacrifice the rights of Indigenous women to maintain its perverse control.

Bill S-2 (formerly *Bill S-4*) is a prime example of legislation drafted by Canada without any legal consultation with First Nations and that uses Indigenous women as the front to achieve destructive assimilatory ends. Senator Grant Mitchell noted this obvious Conservative legislative methodology: "They pick some value that cannot be assailed, apply it to whatever they want and hope that people will not make the link." [5] While *Bill S-2* has been touted as a bill that will protect Indigenous women from violence and offer them legal rights to property upon dissolution of a marriage, it is an illusion. The majority of these women live in poverty and these new "rights" are only accessible via expensive lawyers, experts and court processes—and many live in northern areas without courts. The bill also purports to supercede First Nation jurisdiction over their governance systems and laws, and ignores treaty rights over reserve lands. Even abused Indigenous women living in shelters who were surveyed stated they do not want laws that trample on the sovereignty of their First Nations. [6] The real objective of the bill, however, is to open up reserve lands to non-Indians by giving non-Indian spouses a life-time legal interest in homes and lands on reserve, something which prejudices Indigenous women even more.

What good is *Bill S-2* if these women aren't living on reserve to begin with because *Bill C-3* excluded them? The same can be said of *Bill S-6* regarding First Nation band elections. This legislation purports to increase election terms and allow First Nations to create their own election rules, which is promoted as increasing stability within First Nations. What is not highlighted, however, is the inclusion of new provisions that would empower INAC to take control of a First Nation election process if it deemed there was a dispute, thereby disregarding First Nation jurisdiction over their own governance systems, which purportedly is the very purpose of the legislation itself. This bill has received relatively little attention in the media and no mention has been made of its gender implications. The bill only requires a band council resolution to opt-in, thus excluding the voices of Indigenous women (and other members) from the decision-making process. While others have pointed to custom band election codes as the alternative, some of these codes specifically exclude

[3] Sharon Venne, *Indian Acts and Amendments 1868–1975: An Indexed Collection* (Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan, 1993); Zandra Wilson, ed., *The Indian Acts and Amendments, 1970–1993: An Indexed Collection* (Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan, 1993); *Indian Act*, R.S.C. [1985] c.1-5; Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, *Mineral Resource Potential of Indian Reserve Lands* (1991). Reserves comprise only 0.02% of land in Canada, a fraction of the territories held traditionally by Indigenous peoples.

[4] Pamela Palmater, "When Legislators Make Bad Law: Bill C-3's Assault on Democracy," *Aboriginal Law—Ontario Bar Association* 15.2 (2011).

[5] Senate of Canada, *Proceedings of the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights* (7 June 2010), at 54.

[6] *Ibid.*, *supra* note 30 at 60.

[7] Native Women's Association of Canada, *What Their Stories Tell Us: Research Findings from their Sisters in Spirit Initiative* (Ottawa: NWAC, 2010).

[8] Jorge Barrera, "Sisters in Spirit program used by feds to 'squeeze' Native Women's Association of Canada," *Rabble.ca*, November 4, 2010.

[9] "Assembly of First Nations withdraws from Pickton Inquiry," *National Post*, October 11, 2011, (online, accessed 18 June 2012).

Editor's Note—Thank you to Shiri Pasternak for her kind assistance in preparing this text for publication.

Pamela Palmater is a Mi'kmaq citizen and member of the Eel River Bar First Nation in northern New Brunswick. She is the mother of two boys, Mitchell and Jeremy, and has been a practicing lawyer for 14 years, specializing in laws impacting Indigenous peoples. She is currently the Chair in Indigenous Governance and heads the Centre for Indigenous Governance at Ryerson University. She holds four university degrees, her most recent being a Doctorate of Law (JSD) from Dalhousie University. She was recently awarded the 2012 YWCA Woman of Distinction Award in Social Justice for her advocacy in Indigenous women's issues.

[1] Aboriginal Justice Inquiry of Manitoba, *Report of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry of Manitoba* (Manitoba: Manitoba Government, 1999).

[2] Pamela Palmater, *Beyond Blood: Rethinking Indigenous Identity and Belonging* (Saskatoon: Purich Publishing, 2011).

off-reserve band members from voting. Indigenous women are already over-represented in the off-reserve population and thus excluded from voting.

The same concept applies to the other bills as well. Indigenous women and their descendants are less likely to be counted as Indians, have band membership, live on reserve and be included in the decision-making of their communities. Indigenous women are also “dualy disadvantaged” in the sense that their situation is used by Canada to bolster destructive legislation, which then pits Indigenous women against their communities creating a false dichotomy of women’s rights versus community rights. Meanwhile, the number of murdered and missing women increases, and when Indigenous women raise awareness about this crisis, their organizational funding is cut. [7] If they raise awareness about their deplorable health conditions, that funding is cut as well. [8] When the Pickton Inquiry looked like it might expose the discriminatory attitudes of police, no funding was given to Indigenous women’s groups to testify with legal counsel—but every single police officer was provided with legal counsel. [9] Funding is used as a coercive tool, in addition to specific laws and policies used by Canada to silence the voices of Indigenous women.

Canada’s legislative, policy and funding mechanisms disadvantage Indigenous women at every turn. Yet, the issue is far more complex and insidious than simple “equality”—it is about colonial oppression that continues against Indigenous Nations by targeting Indigenous women. Canada’s worst genocidal acts (forced sterilizations, theft of children for residential schools or adoptions, loss of Indian status) have always targeted Indigenous women directly or through their ability to reproduce. Today, the combined destructive power of state legislation, policy and funding mechanisms act as a constant attack on the well-being of Indigenous women. It is as if Canada’s whole assimilatory plan is based on putting the hearts of our women on the ground, knowing that is the best way to destroy our Nations. While the current debate centres on whether to keep the *Indian Act* or abolish it, Indigenous women are generally left out of the discussion. At the same time, the current legislative initiatives should not be focused on ensuring the integration of Indigenous women into the mainstream system; it should be about getting the mainstream system of control out of the lives of Indigenous women so that they can assume their traditional leadership roles within their communities and bring balance back to their Nations.

RAPE CULTURE AND MASCULINITY

Liam Skinner

In rape culture, sexual assault and other forms of violence against women are both common and tolerated. [1] Evidence of rape culture is found in the prevalence of sexual assault, compared to low rates of arrest, prosecution and conviction. [2] Patriarchy breeds rape culture, which is perpetuated by popular media saturated with images of rape. Historically, anti-rape campaigns have primarily targeted women with the apparent goal of providing tips on how to avoid being raped. [3] Too often, this rhetoric amounts to little more than victim-blaming and fails to assign accountability to the perpetrators. Over the past decade, by contrast, there have been a number of anti-rape campaigns targeting men and their role in rape culture. A growing movement for sexual assault accountability has been promoted by campaigns such as *MyStrength*, *Don’t Be That Guy*, and a host of others designed and run in Canada, the United States and Europe (in particular, Scotland, Ireland and England). While these campaigns are

Liam Skinner is currently enrolled in the Assaulted Women’s and Children’s Counselling Advocate Program (AWCCA) at George Brown College. He has been involved in community organizing for the past eight years as a DJ and promoter/fundraiser for a number of causes. During the summers, when Liam is not in school, he co-facilitates an arts-based therapeutic summer program for youth aged seven to thirteen called Guerilla 12 (myguerilla12.com). During this program they explore topics of identity, community, gender, bullying and displacement, while supporting artistic expression and community-building across differences.

[1] Editor’s Note—For a comprehensive and devastating description of rape culture, see Melissa McEwan, “Rape Culture 101” *Shakesville* (online, accessed 14 June 2012).

evidence of shifting societal attitudes towards rape, they generally lack a critical feminist lens that would allow them to promote affirmative consent and a substantive move away from cultures of gendered violence. [4]

Since these campaigns are intended to be tools for advancing rape awareness and anti-rape politics, it is worth asking what kinds of awareness and politics they promote. How is it that they seek to recast ideas of appropriate manliness? Or represent the complexity of coercive dynamics in sexual relationships? Working from a Trans-masculine perspective, the following will develop a critical feminist analysis of this recent development in the world of sexual assault accountability, taking two specific campaigns as examples.

An important element of the feminist sexual assault accountability movement is affirmative consent, which can be summed up by the phrase “Yes Means Yes” (in place of the familiar “No Means No”). Affirmative consent is best promoted in the recent Canadian campaign *Don’t Be That Guy*, first conceived in Edmonton and launched by Crime Prevention Ottawa. The campaign features tag lines like “Just because you help her home, doesn’t mean you get to help yourself” and (my personal favourite): “Just because she isn’t saying no, doesn’t mean she’s saying yes.” Two of the three campaign posters feature images of women passed out, either face-down and alone on a couch, or being carried to a car to be cared for and taken home by a man. The third poster simply states, “Just because she’s drunk, doesn’t mean she wants to fuck.”

The *Don’t Be That Guy* campaign acknowledges the importance of affirmative consent on the part of the vulnerable person (assumed in this campaign to be a woman), but still relies on an appeal to genuine masculinity and the many stereotypes that come with it. In order to develop a more robust culture of affirmative consent, we need a sexual revolution that makes practicing communication as ubiquitous as practicing safe sex. Condom use was promoted to young, sexually active people in response to the AIDS epidemic of the 1990s. Today, communication needs to be promoted among all sexually active and future sexually active people in response to the epidemic of rape, assault and sexual violence.

MyStrength is a project of the California Department of Health Services and the Coalition Against Sexual Assault (CALCASA). Originally designed by Washington DC’s Men Can Stop Rape, the campaign focuses on (date) rape awareness and targets young men with the phrases “My strength is not for hurting,” “So when I wanted her I asked her—and took no for an answer” and “So when she was drunk, I backed off.” The campaign emphasizes (mostly heterosexual-presenting) couples on dates that do not lead to sexual satisfaction for the presenting male partner or friend. These ads appeal to notions of gallant masculinity, politely requesting that men recognize when their partners are unable to give consent and to refrain from assaulting them in such a state.

Another poster from the *MyStrength* series proclaims, “So when men disrespect women, we say that’s not right.” The theme of bystander intervention is taken up in Men Can Stop Rape’s newest campaign, “Where do you Stand?” The ad asks potential bystanders whether they are the kind of guy that “takes a stand” against potential sexual violence against women with slogans like “When Kate seemed too drunk to leave with Chris, I checked in with her.” Men in these ads are positioned in a way that glorifies images of themselves and their strength to “stand up” and be a “man.” In so doing, these ads speak to and reinforce the internalized narratives of gender expectation and hetero-patriarchy.

While some of the messaging in these campaigns targets the common tropes used to justify sexualized assault, as in *Don’t Be That Guy*, the more general trend appears to be to appeal to those patriarchal norms that are nominally opposed to rape. Classically conservative, these are the ideas of men as honourable, protective, gentleman-like (but not necessarily gentle), faithful, most often monogamous, and so on. While politely discouraging men from raping women, these campaigns manage to promote hetero-sexist and cis-sexist stereotypes that cast women as weak, vulnerable, non-aggressive and incapable of making decisions for themselves. They reinforce male power and privilege to make final decisions about a woman’s well-being. They obscure the fact that racialized women, poor women, Trans* people, disabled women, immigrant and refugee women experience sexual violence differently than cisgendered heterosexual white women. Overall, these campaigns suggest that rape has been removed from the menu of acceptable male behaviour, while preserving or promoting a range of other patriarchal attitudes, in particular the idea of men as decision-makers, material providers and romantic pursuers, the active agents in the drama of love. This means a campaign of persuasion which half-chastises men but still appeals to phallic power, by implying that masculine strength is greatest exactly at the point when men restrain themselves (as if to say: I am more than capable of hurting, but I choose not to).

Though I commend any attempt to shift the accountability for rape onto its perpetrators, a rich notion of affirmative consent is required to really do this. This means moving from “No Means No” to “Consent is Sexy,” or “Yes Means Yes.” Better yet (albeit less catchy), “Communication Is Sexy, So When I Wasn’t Sure, I Asked For Consent.” To be truly successful, future campaigns should offer an outright challenge to the myths of masculinity, male power and entitlement over women’s bodies and sexuality. Tipping a cap to chivalry and calling on peer pressure can’t be the only ways to engage men. Men must be involved in understanding misogyny, sexism and directed to challenge hetero-patriarchy as well as dominant definitions of masculinity. Ultimately, what we need to see is a fundamental shift away from rape culture, which can never happen by virtue of a few good guys learning to restrain themselves. Instead, we need to embrace a critical feminist position that works against hetero- and cis-sexism while promoting affirmative consent.

[2] According to Statistics Canada, “over 80% of sex crime victims are women. (I wonder if they include Trans-women), 83% of disabled women will be sexually assaulted during their lifetime [and] 1 in 4 North American women will be sexually assaulted.” Yet, “of every 100 incidents of sexual assault, only six are reported to the police.” (www.statcan.gc.ca). According to statistics from the Canadian Centre for Justice, “conviction rates in adult criminal courts are lower for sexual offences than for other types of violent crime. Half of sexual offences are likely to result in a finding of guilt.” (www.sexassault.ca).

[3] Never go out alone at night. Stay alert. Don’t linger on the streets. Don’t tease guys sexually. Always lock your windows and doors. Always park where there is good lighting. Always communicate clearly and assertively that you don’t want sex. Carry a whistle.

[4] Rape and sexual violence do not only affect women (a category that is, in my usage, inclusive of Trans- and self-identified women) but also men, and many other gender identities. My focus is on women because they are affected by rape and sexual violence disproportionately and the campaigns I refer to here focus on sexual violence against women.

Editor’s Note—Thank you to Francisco-Fernando Granados for his kind assistance in preparing this text for publication.

FEMINISMS WITHOUT END...

Now, I-woman am going
to blow up the Law:
a possible and inescapable
explosion from now on;
let it happen, right now,
in language.

– Hélène Cixous

Randy Lee Cutler and Magnolia Pauker

It strikes us that feminism as an idea, a history and a practice is all too often posed as a question – feminism? This is not to say that questions should be foreclosed, but rather that the validity of feminism itself must be marked otherwise! The assertion of an exclamation mark is a shout otherwise (under)scoring a statement that expresses pleasure and protest, sometimes simultaneously. Indeed, the winter 2011 issue of the German art journal *Texte zur Kunst* (*TzK*) opens with a single word – *Feminismus!* – organized as it is around the theme of feminism today. [1]

But what does this auspicious opening offer readers, and in this case the reviewers who seek to provide a glimpse into the range of essays presented under the sign *Feminismus!*? Perhaps we can begin by reading the exclamation mark as a quotation from *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution*, the wildly popular retrospective of art and feminism that travelled across North America five years ago. [2] Rather than a solitary

flash, “For the authors of *Texte zur Kunst*, questions related to the role of women in the art world as well as theoretical debates on feminist theories or concepts of gender and queer studies have been and still are recurring points of reference in analyzing sociopolitical and art-political interrelations. Nevertheless, it is no coincidence that we are (re)turning to this theme in a concentrated manner at this juncture.” [3] Perhaps the exclamation mark is an interjection, maintaining a space for diverse and often contradictory voices, approaches and sensibilities.

The not-so-feminist novelist F. Scott Fitzgerald once wrote: “Cut out all those exclamation marks. An exclamation mark is like laughing at your own jokes.” (LOL) Sadly, this derision of the exclamation mark might likewise be said to describe the waves of backlash against feminist politics, which the editors of *TzK* identify as having “evidently reached a precarious moment in its history.” [4] There have always been anti-feminists who dismiss the movement altogether, but today there are also those who claim that feminism is a historical movement that has accomplished its goals and is therefore no longer of critical import, a claim often launched as both historical erasure and a justification of present-day inequalities (employment, healthcare, poverty, &c.): “[L]ike all social movements, [feminism] aims at self-abolition, precisely because its pivotal category is in various ways factually connected to inequality and thus with the lack of freedom for those subsumed under it.” [5] (And it is not surprising then that simulacra of commodity feminism such as Madonna and Lady Gaga are so often trotted out as evidence for the fallacious claims made by the hallucinatory neoliberal discourse.) When historicized as a social justice movement that has achieved its ends with expressions like postfeminism(!), the generative criticality of feminism as an ever-emergent methodology for thinking about ongoing relations of domination – patriarchy, racism, homophobia, class, &c – is negated, even abolished.

One of the most useful strategies that the *TzK* issue on feminism offers its readers is an affective mix of writing from a range of voices. Julia Voss’s “Gentlemen’s Club of Modernity or the Wolf in Sheep’s Clothing” introduces the edition with a fascinating piece on art forgery, gender and what she calls an “ugly continuity” [6] where the same modern artists, almost exclusively male, regularly set record prices at auctions and enjoy solo exhibitions at prestigious galleries and museums. This is described as a private economy where, “[a]s sponsors of selected exhibitions, the German business world created a modernism according to their own model: male, creative and successful.” [7] Voss’s study is followed by a survey of short contributions from artists as well as art and film historians. One of the effects for the reader is an increasing awareness of how feminismS have been interpellated into institutional systems, becoming in some contexts instrumentalized – depoliticized, naturalized, and even aestheticized as the common parlance of the academy. Emphasizing the fact that feminismS are more than a theoretical paradigm, together these essays draw attention to the impact of neoliberal doublespeak – “ideology according to which there was no such thing as discrimination, only individual failure, and therefore no

Whether through performance art, experimental video, photographs, recipes, interventions in gallery windows or creative/critical writing, Randy Lee Cutler’s practice explores the aesthetics of appetite and embodiment. She has authored numerous essays published in *C Magazine*, *Pyramid Power*, *Fillip*, *Vancouver Art & Economies*, *Uncanny: Experiments in Cyborg Culture*, *FUSE*, *West Coast LINE*, *n.paradoxa*, *BlackFlash*, *Canadian Art* and *Yishu: Journal of Contemporary Chinese Art*, on topics as diverse as digestion, truth-telling, orientalism, feminism, photography and social change. Originally from Montreal, she lives in Vancouver where she is an associate professor at Emily Carr University.

Magnolia Pauker is an educator, writer, and interviewer based in Vancouver. Her practice takes up the interview as a model for critical engagement, knowledge production and pedagogy. With a strong focus on feminism, especially as it informs art history and contemporary culture, Pauker is invested in emergent forms of knowing and living. Often working at the edges of philosophy and cultural studies, she is committed to engaging contemporary aesthetic and political events. She is associate editor at *Fillip* and Fellow at the European Graduate School, where she is writing her dissertation under the direction of Avital Ronell.

victims, only losers who had no one to blame but themselves.” [3] We appreciate how Gertrud Koch, in her piece “Feminism After Identity Politics,” offers the above insight and reminds us that “women are still disproportionately likely to be poor in old age because they still earn drastically lower wages than men in similar employment situations.” [8] While women are considered equal according to the law, structural inequalities persist in our everyday lives, and while women may be thought of as equal, we are not consistently regarded as such. Unfortunately, this is apparent in how feminismS are taken up in the *TzK* special issue without attending to the persistent inequalities of the postcolonial context and the complexity of contemporary embodiments.

And yet the texts featured in *TzK* do articulate multiple ways that feminist critique has taught us how intimately linked patriarchy and capitalism are – inextricably so. As the crisis of late industrial capitalism unfolds and the tide of popular protest rises around the world, the radical potential of feminist, gender and queer politics must be actively engaged as the ongoing legacy of feminismS. Acknowledging the specificities of individual embodiments enables us to begin to trace and intervene in our own complicity within the multitude of repressions, both historical and present. For, how can we advocate for the abolition of gender discrimination without also acknowledging other forms of domination? While many of the pieces in *TzK* consider these complicated realities, others, like artist Zoe Leonard’s “some moments from a feminist year,” present a more straightforward snapshot, a list of contemporary feminist political engagements including:

feminism is angela davis speaking at
occupy wall street

feminism is judith butler speaking at occupy
wall street...

feminism is “i want a dyke for president”
being read out loud by hundreds of people
in a public square in madrid...

feminism is wu tsang...

feminism is louise bourgeois...

feminism can be a structure...

feminism is you right now reading this

feminism is what you do right after
you read this [9]

Leonard’s list registers the multiplicity of feminist actions and theoretical perspectives gesticulating towards the plurality of feminismS. This leads us to consider, in seeking to establish solidarities across hegemonic borderzones, how we strive to open an inclusive dialogue, which is at once multi-generational and geographically dispersed. Indeed, we joyfully see this commitment to futurity taken up in the transgender artist Wu Tsang’s description of her video work as

necessarily shared with the future. What is of critical import in our contemporary moment is not a utopian abolition of gender, class or capitalism, but a better understanding of how all forms of oppression must be recognized as relational and not thought of as discrete or antithetical struggles. Strategic (dis)orientation is tied to how we each speak about our struggles and commitments and the ways in which meaning is constructed out of an empowered engagement with signs and images. This critical undertaking does lead us to wonder about the choice of Lady Gaga for the front cover of *TzK*, wearing what is perhaps a wedding gown of the future (gauze and white lace finished with a crocheted headpiece of pearls and white feathers)! Why is she thus befrocked? We view the Gaga phenomenon, with her contradictory insistences that she is and is *not* a feminist as a floating signifier of contemporary postfeminism. The connections among stylized performance, commodity feminism, sexual rhetoric and social change need to be considered. Yet *TzK* does not provide any contextualization, resulting in the apparent championing of this particular figure and image. That Gaga’s inclusion is not addressed anywhere in the issue leaves us dissatisfied with what we sense as *TzK*’s unproblematic endorsement.

The complex relations between daily experience and visual culture are powerfully charged in the heightened clime of the contemporary backlash against women’s rights in general and feminism in particular. Amy Sillman’s “Affirmative Reaction” explores the current distaste for identity politics and locates some of her discussion within the art school context. “Every action in this world is inflected by positionality. So an opposition to identity politics just feels like a revulsion against subjectivity, a fear of personal experience, a hatred for otherness and ultimately an expression of self-hatred.” [10] Sillman suggests that identity politics has been folded into questions that address not only gender but also “form, color, history, memory, affect, meaning, visibility, etc.” mobilizing student reading groups that porously expand beyond educational environments where the fertile ground of creativity, aesthetics and subjectivity is embraced as a means for generating affinity groups and “frameworks for the engagement of collective imaginations.” [11]

Sillman’s call for an affirmative approach is somewhat tempered and brought into critical context in relation to Monika Rinck’s “The Diva Principle,” in which she necessarily focuses readers’ attention on the false offers of cooperation and models of empowerment, as well as the pleasures we experience in refusing and defying such simulations. While attending to the problematics of endless availability and life-sustaining instances of extravagance, there are useful reminders here to appreciate the option of refusing conventional gendered behaviours. In expounding her Diva principles, Rinck states that “Collision is correct.” [12] Certainly, taking a stand and disagreeing is sometimes necessary, but we also think that conversation is generally more fruitful than collision, especially when the invisible status quo can be destabilized in the process.

Striking at the foundations of the hegemonic gender binary, Elahe Haschemi Yekani’s essay “Intersections and Other Dangers on the Path to Equality” highlights emergent conversations in the plural by

[1] Unless otherwise noted, all essays cited are included in *Texte zur Kunst* 84, *Feminismus!* (December 2011).

[2] For an extensive listing of feminist arts activities from 2002 to 2007, see Randy Lee Cutler, “A Spectrum of Difference,” *The Fillip Review* 9 (Winter 2009), Projectile Publishing Society, Vancouver, BC.

[3] Sabeth Buchmann, Isabelle Graw and Juliane Rebentisch, “Preface,” in *TzK*, 6.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid., 6–7.

[6] Julia Voss, “Gentlemen’s Club of Modernity or the Wolf in Sheep’s Clothing,” in *TzK*, 32.

[7] Ibid., 38.

[8] Gertrud Koch, “Feminism After Identity Politics,” in *TzK*, 70.

[9] Zoe Leonard, “some moments from a feminist year,” in *TzK*, 72–73.

[10] Amy Sillman, “Affirmative Reaction,” in *TzK*, 78.

[11] Ibid., 80.

[12] Monika Rinck, “The Diva Principle,” in *TzK*, 110.

[13] Nairy Baghramian, “... You go First,” in *TzK*, 50.

[14] There is a history of the exclamation mark that resonates with notes of admiration and joy. Indeed, the mark itself may have come from the Latin *io*, meaning exclamation of joy, written with the *i* above the *o*.

Editor’s Note – Thank you to Lucas Freeman for his kind assistance in preparing this text for publication.

pointing to how the category of woman is often not only essentialist, but too simplistic. She calls for the ongoing need to maintain complexity and acknowledge conflict while embracing shared concerns. Yekani explores how Intersectional Studies investigates the ways in which hegemonic constructions of gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation and social background together function as interwoven and inextricable forces of domination in the ongoing articulation of mechanisms of exclusion. In searching for a paradigm of thinking and enacting relationships and subject formations, Yekani seeks to understand forms of oppression through axes of identity that are neither categorical nor discipline-specific. In taking up and problematizing abolition, feminismS and Intersectional Studies establish the means to intervene in the exclusionary practices of disciplinary specificity and discrete categories of identity. With its rich history and knotty herstory, feminismS continue to advance a brave future, especially where theory meets practice and lived experience accompanies ideological complexity.

Our shared reading of the *TzK* special issue has us wondering about the designation of feminism as singular, inadvertently rendering diverse strategies as somehow unified and consolidated. For us, pluralizing the word acknowledges the distinctions not only among the various historical waves, but also the real and ongoing activities of women across a range of often contradictory engagements. In physics a wave is an oscillation that, while traveling through spacetime is accompanied by a transfer of energy, producing vibrations that shift and disturb matter in unpredictable ways. Heterogeneous approaches, troubles, presumptions and collisions are among the myriad forms in which unpredictability is manifest in the feminist project itself. Indeed, Nairy Baghramian notes in *TzK* that, "[w]hen feminist demands are nonetheless put on the agenda, people like to avoid the potential conflict associated with them by pointing out that there is not just one feminism but multiple feminisms." [13] Strategically (dis)oriented as we are towards the future, the challenge continues to be not only to name and describe the problems we encounter, but to maintain a series of emergent conversations that draw on the past while reflecting the contingencies of the present—ideally with exclamations of joy. [14] Here such an engagement requires that we refuse the discourse of ends, and instead embrace difficulty, multiplicity and the irresolvable tensions involved in living and thinking together, expressing pleasure and protest, sometimes simultaneously!

PROJECT STATEMENTS

Some Feminists in Your Neighborhood
Complicity, Objection, Castration, Recomposition: Phases of a Political Process
 (page 11 and 36)

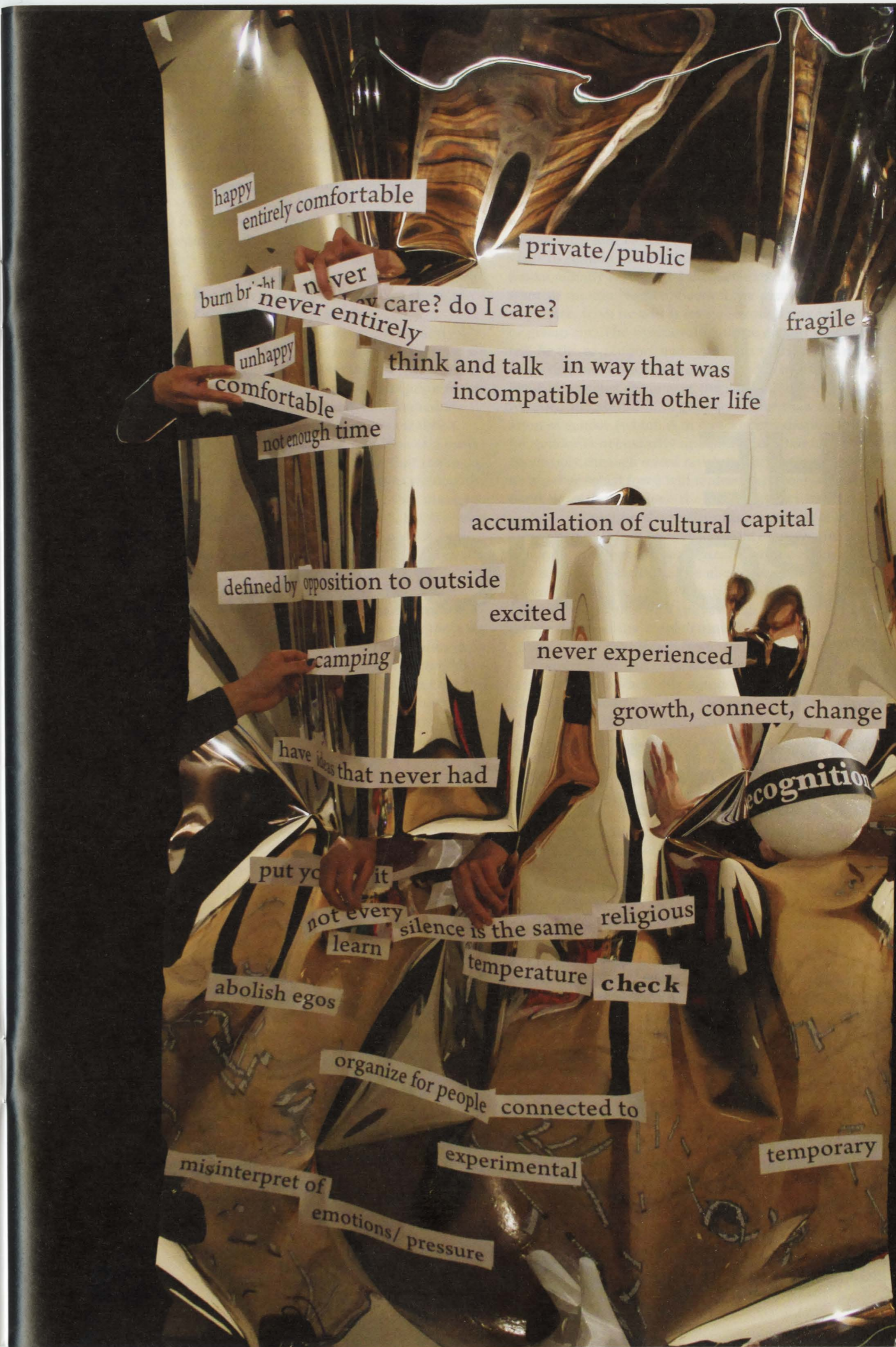
Some Feminists in Your Neighborhood is a group of women joined together through the mutual experience of patriarchy in supposedly radical political collectives and contexts. Together we have overcome our complicity in the abusive structures in which we were participants, found the solidarity that enabled us to object, and developed the means necessary to destroy those structures—through the castration performed by our withdrawal. We are now working on recomposition as we experiment with ways to struggle with one another that do not reproduce the patriarchy from which we separated. Our contribution to *FUSE* documents phases of the political process as they have appeared to us. Our names are Colleen Asper, Maria Byck, Marika Kandelaki, Sunita Prasad and Martyna Starosta.

Counter Narrative Society
 Mabel Negrete
Sensible Housing Unit
 2008 – ongoing
 (page 24 and 34)

The Sensible Housing Unit (SHU) is a fabric replica of a prison cell that is used by the Counter Narrative Society (CNS) to engage audiences in critical dialogue about the human and civil rights issues in prison control units. The *SHU* is activated as a public forum to share the stories of our brothers and sisters, relatives and friends, neighbours and comrades who have been subjected to the brutal psychological isolation and physical violence in super maximum security prisons.

The project can be presented in collaboration or in coordination with the CNS. Family members, former prisoners, friends, activists, collectives or organizations facilitating an artistic, academic or political awareness event dedicated to the advancement of the human and civil rights of the incarcerated and formerly incarcerated should contact the CNS (info@thecounternarrative-society.org).

Mabel Negrete is a performance-research based artist and trouble maker who works with the CNS, a research unit that works to initiate counter narratives about bio-power, urbanism, culture and technology. The SHU is a major ongoing project of the CNS; it has been presented at the Occidental College (2012), Lost Coast Culture Machine (2011), University of San Francisco (2009), Mission Cultural Center for the Latino Art (2009) and the Mission Arts Performance Project (2008). The images included in this volume of *FUSE* document a performance in the fields facing Corcoran State Prison, California (2009).



ON THE ABOLITION OF ~~GENDER~~

Folie à Deux

Introduction: The Dilemma of Identity

We refuse to set aside the oppression—both brutal and tacit—of queers, women of colour, Trans* [1] people, women, Black, brown, Asian-American, Chicana@, Muslim, Indigenous, fags, dykes... as something to be dealt with later, *after* the revolution, and we refuse to treat these struggles as mere springboards for the more central and fundamental struggle of the proletariat. These oppressions and violences are not derivative, secondary or epiphenomenal to the central class contradiction. There is no more opportunity to abolish patriarchy or racism within capitalism than there is opportunity to abolish class exploitation.

Because these oppressions are constantly denied, pushed aside, imagined as incidental; because we experience our conditions as intolerable in the present; because one attacks a structure from one's location within it—for all these reasons we see a real and immediate need to organize around them. We need to establish autonomy so we can develop shared affinities as a basis for abolishing the relations of domination that make self-organization necessary. And yet, even as we do this, we want to be freed of the social relations that make us *into* women, queers, women of color, Trans*, &c. We want to be liberated from these categories themselves, but experience teaches us that the only way out is through.

We present here our reflections on the dilemma of identity and liberation. We suggest that communization theory, a tendency within the tradition of left or anti-state communism, offers us some tools for thinking through the seeming conflict between autonomy and abolition as approaches to our own liberation. Yet we also point to the limits of this theory as it currently exists, and show how we might draw upon feminist, queer and anti-racist theoretical and political traditions to begin the project of developing a more rigorous and complex theoretical framework.

Abolition

In our view, "woman" is not something to be saved or elevated. It is a relational category, one side of a binary that is necessarily hierarchical—man/woman. To be a woman is to be produced as an appropriable body; to be a man is to be produced as a gender that appropriates bodies, their activity and their time. [2] All biological definitions of man and woman are constructs which, if put under even the softest interrogation, prove to be forever porous, runny, inaccurate, insufficient, violent, coercive and ultimately tools of subordination.

Instead of biological answers, we must search for social and historical ones. What is gender distinction but a social relation in which men and women are produced and reproduced? Some have said that the relation between men and women is a class relation. We prefer to reserve the term class for the relation between surplus producers and surplus expropriators, but agree that the material basis of gender is a hierarchical one in which men have power. The definition of capitalists

is *those who own the means of production and exploit workers*, and the definition of workers is *those who must sell their labour in order to survive*, for fear of otherwise being cast out onto the street to waste away. Similarly, the definition of men is *those who appropriate women*, and the definition of women is those who are appropriated by men.

This tells us two things: first, there is nothing to be salvaged in the gender binary, in the identity of women or men, because this binary is nothing but a hierarchical and violent social relation. Just as we do not want to remain proletarians, because this condition is fundamentally constituted through exploitation, we do not want to remain women. Second, we cannot step outside of gender, wish or will it away, through any individual or group act. The overcoming of the gender distinction will *be* the revolution, and until then we fight and struggle; however, we cannot overcome gender in little pockets, little communes, no matter the strength of our will. Thus we need the abolition of gender, rather than the equalization of gender (which is in fact a contradiction in terms, for gender is necessarily unequal), and that abolition will occur only through a real revolutionary upheaval, because no smaller social force will undermine the material conditions that produce the gender binary itself.

Further, the abolitionist perspective is conceived within a framework that sees gender as an *inherent element of the capitalist mode of production*, and so the revolution as the abolition of gender will also mean the destruction of capital. This has prompted new interrogations into the relation between the gender distinction and the class distinction.

We take much from the theory of revolution as communization and believe that communization theory is primed to do what only a minority of Marxist-feminists have attempted to do over the last 50 years of inquiry: re-articulate the capitalist totality as being constituted no less by the man/woman relation than by the class relation. [3] This would be a "single system" theory in which the gender relation and the class relation are equally necessary elements within a totality, rather than subsumed one to the other as per "dual system" theories that posit two different and autonomous (however relatively) systems of patriarchy and capitalism.

We say communization is primed for this project because one of the major interventions of communization theory has been its theorization of capitalism as the abolition not only of capitalists, but also of workers; of work itself and thus of value; and of *the wage-labour relation itself* and thus of the distinction between work and life. [4] This distinction between work and life has been widely examined by theorists of gender, who have used a range of conceptual dyads to describe separate spheres: public/private; social/non-social; public/domestic. Most theorists of gender have articulated this division—no matter what they call it—as a grounding element in the production of gender. Thus, communization's very starting point is a demand for the abolition of the fundamental material elements of the reproduction of gender—the division of social life into two spheres. This theoretical tenet already moves us in the direction of a unified system theory of gender and class.

Folie à Deux is also known as shared psychotic disorder, a rare delusional disorder experienced by two or more people with close emotional ties. Most people diagnosed with folie à deux have been women, often sisters or close friends. The most famous of these were Christine and Léa Papin, French sisters who in 1933 murdered the bourgeois family who employed them as live-in maids. We are comrades with Hysteria. We believe in truth but not His truth.

[1] The asterisk has been used recently by some people at the end of Trans* to indicate the inclusion of transsexual, transgender, gender-nonconforming, gender-neutral, gender-queer, gender-variant, and other varying gender identities. It is insufficient, like all other possible denotations, but we are using it here.

[2] Appropriation is a term used by Marx to refer to the seizure of exchange- or use-values by those who did not produce them. It is used by the French communist group Théorie Communiste in their theory of gender to refer to the process by which men as a social group exercise control over and use for their own benefit the bodies and labour-power of women.

[3] I. M. Young, Maria Mies, Silvia Federici, Katherine Mackinnon, F. Carnevale and others. Some, like Gloria Joseph and Evelyn Nakano Glenn, have also called for producing theory that posits race as a necessary structural element.

Additionally, because it describes the gender binary as a material relation of exploitation or oppression in which the two sides are socially produced, communication theory articulates patriarchy in a way that opens a road for linking the exploitation and oppression of women with violence and oppression based on heteronormativity and cis-normativity. The violent relations produced by the forced binary gendering of bodies and the enforcement of heterosexuality in all spheres of life are as much a part of patriarchy as is the production of male domination over women and, in fact, these processes reinforce one another. When it is the *hierarchized and policed binary itself* that is understood as the motor of gendered oppression, appropriation, exploitation and violence (rather than, for instance, men's uncontrollable desire to procreate, or social stigmas regarding women's capabilities), we are more able to understand how transgender, gender-nonconforming, queer, gay, lesbian and so on, are also identities produced, policed, regulated and attacked according to a dynamic of exploitation grounded in the patriarchal binary.

The story of feminism's many strains of transphobia and racism is fairly well known. Both of these feminist bigotries have relied heavily on two assumptions, both of which are attacked by theories of gender abolition: first, the assumption that there is some essence of womanhood or femininity that must be preserved, elevated or "made equal" with men. This essence is almost always white and cis-gendered. Second, the assumption that gendered oppression has a particular quality, and that all women experience it in the same way. A good example of this second assumption is the white western feminist emphasis on housework and confinement to the home as the primary location of gendered exploitation. Evelyn Nakano Glenn, Patricia Hill Collins, Angela Davis and an array of other anti-racist feminists have shown clearly that women of colour in the United States have always worked outside their own homes, and do not experience the lynchpin of their gendered oppression in domestic space. Transfeminists and queer theorists have shown that violence against queer and Trans* people often takes the form of *exclusion* from the home, which means exclusion from the minor protections that the fucked-up family form affords some (mostly straight and white) people in our society.

—
Autonomy
—

To be a feminist is to be a paranoid. Everyone tells us that we are reading into things too much, that what we are seeing isn't there. There are particular emotional registers with which we become familiar: skepticism, mistrust, defensiveness. Our reactions are never proportionate to the actions that preceded them. Our anger is experienced by others as uninteresting, as formulaic. Sometimes we too become bored with our performance of indignation. *I object*, we say, again and again, and our mouths ache. Woman: she who is asked to resolve an irresolvable contradiction, or upon whom is placed the burden of hiding its irresolvability, or she who is blamed for her

failure to resolve it or to hide it. But it is not possible for us to avoid certain emotional registers, certain mundane postures. The alternative to anger is despair, it is shades of self-obliteration too bleak to bear. It is not that we addressed the problem incorrectly but that there is no correct way to address the problem. *It is the social relation that produces us as women with problems, and as men who create problems, that is the problem.*

The problem for women is not just uncovering what is political in the personal and personal in the political; it is finding a way to live inside of a contradiction wherein we experience simultaneously the concrete and the abstract nature of gender relations. This way of living is always unsatisfactory, and it is that fact—the fact of our own dissatisfaction, of the impossibility of fitting our lives within the paradigms we are given for them—that forms the material for our resistance. At some point we begin looking for others suffering from our condition. Others with whom our private hallucinations can be recast as social, and with whom the impossibility of our position forms the foundation for a kind of sharing between the insane. [5]

In the above passage, M. Sandovsky writes about living with the contradictions produced by gender, and coming to feel a strong need to join with others with whom she shares some elements of a common experience based on her social position. We find such affective descriptions useful to convey the importance of autonomy as a strategy used by oppressed groups to manage their alienation and isolation.

While essentializing concepts of womanhood and femininity will inevitably fail, there are nonetheless some strong patterns of similarity between geographically and racially varied forms of gendered oppression and exploitation—locally, regionally and globally. Consequently, we see an immense need to organize autonomously in what some call separatist circles, along lines of what we often call identity, but by which we really mean *shared experiences of oppression, violence and exploitation, and shared forms of subjectivity produced through these experiences.*

There have been many such autonomous groups in recent times in the US, including women- and Trans*-only spaces, discussion groups and organizing circles and queer and Trans* people of colour-only groups, events, blockades, &c. An autonomous/separatist praxis serves many necessary functions: it gives space to think through things that can't be thought in the presence of those who oppress or exploit us or tacitly benefit from our oppression (so we don't have to be afraid of them, argue with them, or even patiently explain to them while we're speaking and being with each other). This space-time and connectivity is necessary in order to develop ways of attacking the things that are killing and maiming us and to figure out who our enemies are (that is, who and what we must attack, what attacks will be fruitful, and in what ways).

We are indebted to the history of separatist feminist movements, to the militantly autonomous struggles of Black people, Latin@s, Asian-Americans,

[4] In one of the few published texts to examine the relation between gender abolition and communication theory, Maya Gonzalez writes regarding fellow communicationist group Théorie Communiste: "Crucially, they focus on the reproduction of the capital-labor relation, rather than on the production of value. This change of focus allows them to bring within their purview the set of relations that actually constructs capitalist social life—beyond the walls of the factory or office. And the gender relation has always extended beyond the sphere of value production alone." Maya Gonzalez, "Communication and the Abolition of Gender," in *Communication and its Discontents: Contestation, Critique and Contemporary Struggles*, ed. Benjamin Noys (Minor Compositions, 2011), 224. Available on libcom.org (accessed 14 June 2012).

[5] M. Sandovsky, "Paranoia and Visions." Forthcoming in *LIES*. (liesjournal.info).

Native-Americans, Muslim-Americans, and other racialized or ethnic groups attacking white supremacy and capitalism; to the queers who call to kill straightly; to the Trans* people declaring "die cis seum."

A recent text written by comrades in Oakland under the name Croatoan [6] discusses the necessity of autonomy:

As a group of people of color, women, queers and poor people coming together to attack a complex matrix of oppression and exploitation, we believe in the absolute necessity of autonomous organizing. By "autonomous" we mean the formation of independent groups of people who face specific forms of exploitation and oppression—including but not limited to people of color, women, queers, Trans* people, gender nonconforming people, QPOC. We also believe in the political value of organizing in ways that try to cross racial, gender and sexual divisions.

No demographic category of people could possibly share an identical set of political beliefs, cultural identities or personal values. Accounts of racial, gender and sexual oppression as "intersectional" continue to treat identity categories as coherent communities with shared values and ways of knowing the world. No individual or organization can speak for people of color, women, the world's colonized populations, workers, or any demographic category as a whole—although activists of color, female and queer activists, and labor activists from the Global North routinely and arrogantly claim this right.

We are interested in exploring the question of the relationship between identity-based oppression and capitalism, and are conscious of the fact that the few existing attempts to synthesize these two vastly different political discourses leave us with far more questions than answers. More recent attempts to come to terms with this split between anti-oppression and anti-capitalist politics, in insurrectionary anarchism for example, typically rely on simplistic forms of race and gender critique which begin and end with the police. According to this political current, the street is a place where deep and entrenched social differences can be momentarily overcome. We think this analysis deeply underestimates the qualitative differences between specific forms and sites of oppression and the variety of tactics needed to address these different situations.

Finally, we completely reject a vulgar "class first" politics that argues that racism, sexism, homophobia and transphobia are simply "secondary to" or "derivative of" economic exploitation. The prevalence of racism in the US is not a clever conspiracy hatched by a handful of ruling elites, but from the start has been a durable racial contract between two unequal parties. The US is a white supremacist nation indelibly marked by the legal construction of the "white race" in the 1600s through the formation of a cross-class alliance between a wealthy planter class and poor white indentured servants.

We live in the shadow of this choice and this history. A history that is far from over. [7]

Yet, as we have already suggested, autonomy

is not the end of the road for our struggles. Autonomous organization makes feminism possible, but it also limits and contains feminism's revolutionary force. Communication theory makes this point with regards to the class relation. As the French group Théorie Communiste has written: "Self organization is the first act of the revolution; it then becomes an obstacle which the revolution has to overcome." [8] Theirs is primarily a critique of communist tendencies that affirm working-class identity and view revolution as the ascendance of the working class to power. Instead, they posit the self-abolition of the working class through the destruction of the labour/capital relation. The term "self-abolition" is key, for it locates the power to abolish relations of exploitation within the collective body of the exploited group. It points to the tension inherent in the revolutionary process: a process within which the material bases for the collective affinities that make struggle possible are themselves violently destroyed through conflict and movement, leading to the eventual dissolution of those affinities as relevant descriptors of any kind of shared experience. Autonomy is thus a step toward abolition, not the end goal.

While some of us may be women, queers, Trans*, hyper-exploitable bodies, raped bodies, we understand these categories as bound to a specific historical moment. We imagine that over the course of a revolutionary process, they too will pass into the dustbin of history. We will be the agents who self-abolish, and so we think it is important to avoid developing an analysis or theory which ties us sentimentally to those categories which describe our exploitation and oppression.

We consider it an open question how precisely we will abolish ourselves. History has a way of unfolding in directions that no one could previously have anticipated. Thus we avoid the project of making a blueprint of the path to liberation. However, as historical agents we have a vested interest in developing ideas and hypotheses about this path. We sift through the detritus of the past to unearth glimpses of a possible future. We see hints of the way that questions of autonomy and abolition might come to the fore of a revolutionary process in the dynamics of recent struggles, such as the Oaxaca uprising of 2006 and the Argentine mass movement against austerity of 2001. In both of these instances we saw women confront gender violence and subordination within the general movement and organize autonomously in order to challenge it, while still carving out a position for themselves as participants in the uprising. At the same time the organizing they did together—fighting against abusive husbands who sought to keep them from joining the movement, refusing to perform domestic tasks in addition to fighting in the streets, providing each other with emotional and material support—began just barely to undermine the material basis of gender and to erode the differences between the two groups of people called "men" and "women." In the dynamics of these movements we can see hints of the link between autonomy and abolition, though of course without a real revolutionary overthrow of capitalism they must remain just that—hints.

No amount of autonomy and identity-centric analysis can ensure a revolutionary theory or praxis, and

[6] The word "Croatoan" was found carved on a tree on Roanoke Island off the North Carolina coast by Governor John White in 1590, when he returned to the island from England and discovered all the British colonists had mysteriously vanished. No trace of them was ever found. Also, Croatoan is an ailment described as a "blood-borne virus" that is demonic in origin, and causes a murderous rage in the people it infects.

[7] See escalatingidentity.wordpress.com.

[8] Théorie Communiste, "Self-organization." Available on libcom.org (accessed 14 June 2012).

this is why we must develop a shared critical vocabulary and understanding of the structural totality of capital, in which racial hierarchies and gendered violence and exploitation are not epiphenomenal but are immanent relations at the same level of abstraction as class. We strive toward a systemic analysis of gender and race relations, the divisions of labour that base themselves in these relations and the material sites and institutions that continually reproduce subordinated raced and gendered identities. It is this kind of analysis that we feel has the potential to strengthen our struggles as we face choices about what to attack, what lines to draw, what to fight for and against, and how to become stronger.

We are looking for the points where communication theory's critique of working-class identity and its necessary relationship to capital converges with anti-essentialist critiques of racialized and gendered identities—queer insurrectionism, afro-pessimism and our own articulation of gender abolitionist feminism are some of the examples we know of. We want to place these recent anti-essentialist but identity-based movements and theories in conversation with theories of communization, with their critique of working-class self-affirmation. As separate modes of inquiry, each of these tendencies falls far short of providing us with the necessary tools to attack the totality of capitalist relations. Feminist theory has either ignored or capitulated to class analysis, and has been riddled historically with white- and cis-supremacy. This is not to mention the consistent presence of a gender essentialism which balks at the notion of abolishing gender altogether. In positioning itself in opposition to a vulgar class-reductionism, anti-racist theory has rejected a serious study of political economy and frequently flattened the question of gender and sexuality, if not outright supported male supremacy and hetero-/cis-normativity. Queer theory's embrace of idealism and postmodernism typically renders it incapable of describing structures rooted in material social relations, and its often implicit or explicit rejection of the concept of patriarchy, at times veering into misogyny, neutralizes many of its potential critiques. Within the communization cohort, only a few pieces on gender have emerged, and nothing has been written on questions of race, sexuality or struggles around Trans* and non-binary gender identities. Generally speaking, the texts and journals of the communizationist canon are highly Euro-centric and lack historical specificity. [9]

So we are left looking for a position that is not available in the current landscape of positions. We feel trapped in a field in which the only intelligible locations are wholly inadequate to our needs—a reformist politics of diversity (inclusion of all identities makes the revolution!); a politics of false and violently imposed unity (unite for the class fight!); an ahistorical and idealist insurrectionism (make total destroy!); a class-reductionist communization (the value form is the key!); and so on.

And so, gender abolitionist feminism begins from a location where we assume that gender, race and class are mutually constitutive of one totality, not

different and homologous relations that are interchangeable or of the same nature or structure—no, these relations have *different structures* but those structures *together compose a larger structure*. That is to say, like three organs in a body, or three parts of a machine, each part or organ has its own role, its own function and its own shape, motion and rhythm, but they cannot be understood in isolation from each other, nor in isolation from the whole. (And it must be said that it is unlikely that there are only three organs or parts in this machine-body).

However, there is still much to be done in terms of analyzing the *particularity* of gender as well as the *particularity* of class and race. They are not homologous, analogous or interchangeable, do not bear similar structures and modes of operating.

Proliferation Versus Abolition of Gender

Some strains of gender theory posit the infinite proliferation of genders as liberatory, and we have been asked how the abolitionist perspective relates to such theories. For us, "gender" inherently implies *two* and thus cannot be multiplied. This may in fact be the only ontological meaning of gender—*two-ness*. And thus the "infinite proliferation" of genders could potentially amount to the abolition of gender, for there would no longer be a concept of two-ness.

We are relatively agnostic on this question. However, it would be useful to point out that many theorists who have called for the infinite proliferation of gender also fall into the trap of liberalism. Our best example is Judith Butler. Butler acknowledges full well the intensity and persistence of gendered violence, the murderous policing of the boundaries around the gender binary. However, her ultimate political injunction is merely to increase and encourage the complex performance of myriad genders and gender identities, and to protect those who effect these transgressions from the patriarchal powers of the state, as well as from populist bigotry. Such measures are essentially nothing more than liberatory individualism ("express who you really are, however you want to!") combined with liberal reformism ("push policies that will improve the lot of gender outlaws and deviants"). Of course, such measures should not be dismissed, for under current social conditions, gender outlaws need to be afforded protection, just like moms and parents need abortions and support for their kids, and just like poor people need welfare. But we avoid equating making do within the system with striving towards its real destruction. Both are necessary, and necessarily distinct.

The Butlerian account often overlooks the important fact that the policed borders which contain the genders, which teach us violently what is acceptable gender presentation, share at least one similarity to national borders: their function is not literally to prevent transgression or porosity, but rather to *manage* and *shape* transgression. Transgression is not, in fact, a problem, and many "transgressive" identities of the past now occupy their own niche in the commodity market. What

[9] This canon consists of the journals *Endnotes*, published in the UK and the US, *Riff-Raff*, from Sweden, and *SIC: International Journal for Communization*, published across Europe, as well as the volume *Communization and its Discontents*.

matters is that these transgressions are neutralized, so that they do not threaten anything. Liberalism cannot attack this process. The proliferation of genders can begin to sound like a consumerist heaven. At some level, we recognize that the abolition of gender does not sound so different. This is why we prefer to fly the flag of abolishing patriarchy (qua gender): abolishing capital (qua class); and abolishing racism/white supremacy (qua race).

The Now

The question of the abolition of patriarchy is a question of revolution.

If gender is coterminous with the division of society into two spheres—waged/nonwaged, social/nonsocial, private/public—then the abolition of gender will require the abolition of classed society. Insofar as we can abolish classed society right now, we can abolish gender.

Can we abolish patriarchy right now? Can we abolish capital right now? Who are "we"? And what is "now"?

We think we first have some other questions to which we must attend. From Sky Palace's recent article, "Call for a New Approach":

How do we assess existing theories of the totality of capital and the many different theories that attempt to describe the structure of race, gender, and class? How does our understanding of this totality affect our understanding of struggle and of liberation?

How do we conceive of political practice in which the identity category that forms the basis for organization does not become the basis for a kind of nationalism, essentialism, or a politics of affirmation and authenticity in which occupying a subordinated position is in itself taken as radical or revolutionary? Can we conceive of a dialectic of autonomy and revolt that through its synthesis has the power to destroy the social relation upon which identity categories are built?

What are the points of contradiction where, in the course of struggle, self-organization based on identity categories has a tendency to emerge? How can these points and these forms of self-organization propel the communization process forward? How and when do they become co-opted? Can we look at historical examples to help us understand and speculate about some of the dynamics that might tend to emerge in a revolutionary process?

To what degree can the relation labor/capital, as elaborated by many strains of Marxist theory, be used as a model for understanding gender and race, as in: the relation man/woman, the relation white/nonwhite, the relations straight/queer and cis/Trans*? Can theories of the abolition of the labor/capital relation by the self-organization and then self-abolition of the working class be used in some way to theorize the abolition of gender and race? What are the limits to such a comparison? How do we also make sense of the fact that in reality these relations are not separate but interact and mutually constitute one another, that the abolition of race and gender will unfold inside of and as part of the abolition

of the labor/capital relation, not separate from it? [10]

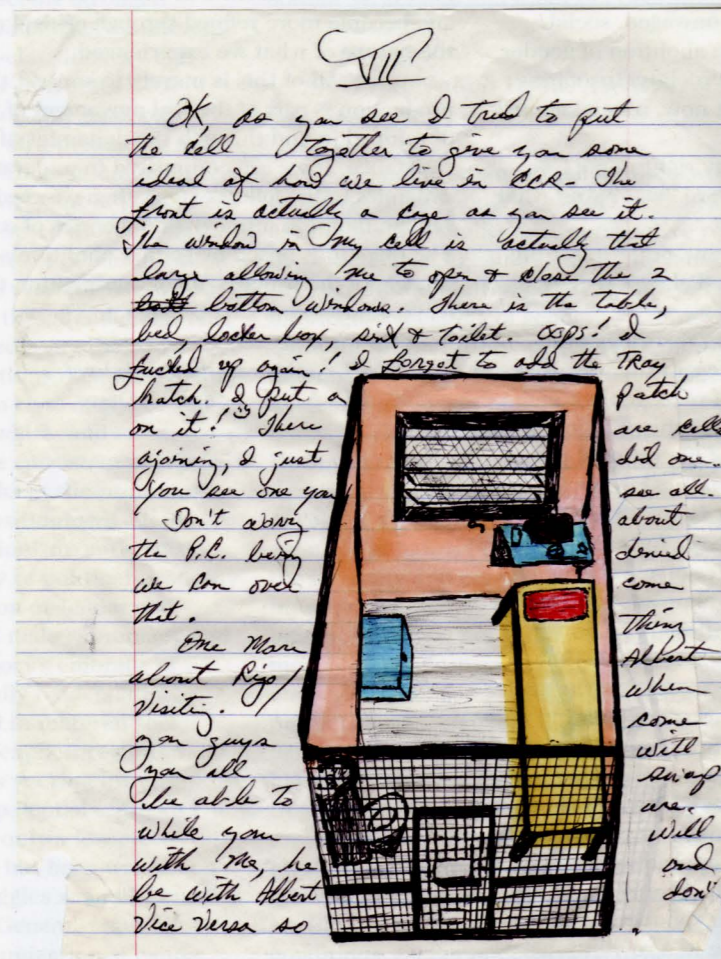
To answer these questions we must rely not only on theoretical and historical accounts but also on a real, practical involvement in struggles as they arise. Our ideas about autonomy and abolition gained strength through our involvement in the occupations of the past year (primarily in New York City and Oakland), which demonstrated to us clearly the need for autonomous spaces for women, queer and Trans* people. At the same time we saw glimpses of how, when we did organize together in this way, our collective intervention into the broader movement—challenging sexual harassment in Occupy camps, fighting to dismantle the gender and racial divisions of labour within the movement—this autonomy might begin to erode the actual content of the gender division itself. Our ideas were tested in struggle, and became more refined through critical reflection upon the nature of what we experienced.

All of this is merely to suggest that theoretical production is part of the real movement of human history, developed in and through the dynamics of revolt and resistance. If we are committed to understanding these dynamics to the fullest extent, then we need to incorporate gender abolition into existing theories of communization. The questions posed by gender abolitionism address aspects of the process of communization that we cannot leave unattended.

With much love,
Folie à Deux

[10] Forthcoming, *LIES* journal.

LIVING IN A PLACE WITH NO PRISONS



← Letter from Herman Wallace to Jackie Sumell with schematic drawing of his solitary confinement cell at Louisiana State Penitentiary (Angola). Jackie Sumell, *The House That Herman Built*, 2002 – ongoing. Image courtesy of the artist.

– On the Collaborative Artwork of Jackie Sumell and Herman Wallace

Nasrin Himada

“Whether I live in that house or not, it makes no difference. It is the symbol of what this house is all about.”

– Herman Wallace

As a prison abolitionist and an interdisciplinary scholar whose research focuses on the relation between art and activism, I am especially taken by Jackie Sumell and Herman Wallace’s project, *The House That Herman Built*. Composed of a touring exhibition, an educational campaign and a feature length documentary, [1] it immediately, it immediately stood out because of its ability to overturn the image of the prison façade as something that cannot be surpassed. Through the re-imagining of the borders between inside and outside prison, Sumell and Wallace’s project creates an expansive visual landscape that calls for the reimagining of grassroots activism: one that is connected to local issues, as it reconnects with global ones. But that is not all. At

the heart of this project is the rigorous development of an “economy of practice” [2] that sets up new modes of valuation, which, unlike in capitalism, invest in life as a source of power.

In March 2011, I visited New Orleans for the first time to present the work of Palestinian filmmaker Kamal Aljafari as part of the Society for Cinema and Media Studies conference (SCMS). [3] There, I took the opportunity to meet with New Orleans-based Sumell to talk about her project with Wallace. [4] Meeting and talking to her about community organizing work, prison abolition, art and architecture was transformative. *The House That Herman Built* cannot simply be read as political art. Rather, it is an example of how to offset the opportunistic rhetorical question, “How is art political?” – a question that is no doubt nothing more than a gimmick in some academic circles, but was nonetheless hard for me to avoid when interviewing Sumell. When asked how her activism and art practice collide, she responded by saying that they just do, without question: “I don’t make very many distinctions in my life... there are so many different things that make it impossible to not be as active as I am. And so many things that make it impossible to not be as creative as I am.”

In theorizing how art constitutes the political, what moves me and what I find most radical is work that demands different kinds of questions or propositions, and work that does not necessarily require simple answers. *The House That Herman Built* fits this description, initially driven by a fervor to free Wallace from prison and, by extension, instigating a conversation around prison abolition activism. [5] Art, in this sense, is utilized as a pragmatic approach to organizing, not as an aesthetic representation of a political situation. The art production and process of *The House That Herman Built* create platforms for mobilizing, and function as instigative forms of communication that ensure the continued efforts to mobilize against

the ever-expanding prison-industrial complex. Deeply inspired by Sumell and Wallace’s challenge, I decided that I need to better articulate the significance of this relationship between art and politics as it emerges out of prison abolition organizing.

Though I can’t pinpoint when I became a prison abolitionist, I have always been angered by the criminal justice system and its antiquated procedures regarding incarceration and penal infrastructure. I am often left in disbelief when it is assumed that legalized penal procedures are the solution to managing, controlling and reacting to what is deemed criminal behaviour and motives. I’ve long thought that punishment in every form is abuse, but it’s only recently that I started to refer to myself as a prison abolitionist. As I wrote to a friend in an email months after I started visiting prisons:

I’ve never fully identified with an ideological or political structure or belief. I’ve never been seduced in that regard. I’ve never said I am an anarchist, or a Marxist. I’ve never said anything like that before in my life. But I do say now, and I want to say, without a doubt, that I am a prison abolitionist. And I’ll stand behind that because it’s a crucial position to take at this time. [Bill C-10 was about to be passed and, it finally did in March 2012. [6] I’ve often thought that this major aspect of our social context would have to change dramatically if society as a whole was going to shift into a different direction and into the one we can collectively imagine, whatever we keep fighting for, or thinking about. If we really want to live in a place that we feel would be better for all of us, then we would have to think of living in a place with no prisons, or thinking more concretely about decarceration and what that would look like.

I have often thought, as we organize and make our presence felt on the streets, [7] that if we are going to take seriously how we imagine a better world prisons shouldn’t be a part of the picture. I feel this strongly today as I see excessive police presence surrounding protests the world over, and the effects of increased incarceration

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[1] While Angad Singh Bhalla’s documentary, *Herman’s House*, is not a part of Jackie and Herman’s collaborative work, it makes an important recent addition to their campaign. See Nahed Mansour and Konstantin Kilibarda’s review of the film in this issue of *FUSE*.

[2] Isabelle Stengers, *Cosmopolitics I*, trans. Robert Bononno (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

[3] Aljafari’s *Port of Memory* is an experimental film about Al Jafari’s family living in Jaffa, a Palestinian coastal town next to the Israeli city of Tel Aviv. The film explores the gentrification and annexation of Jaffa via Israeli military urban planning procedures.

[4] Herman Wallace has been imprisoned in solitary confinement in Louisiana State Penitentiary for 40 years. (also known as Angola)

[5] Prison abolition calls for the complete overhaul of the prison-industrial complex and focuses on building lasting alternatives to punishment and imprisonment. Prison abolition is about foreseeing the gradual elimination of prisons as alternative models are put into place that do not conform to—or try to



↑
Documentation of correspondence between Herman Wallace and Jackie Sumell, *The House That Herman Built*, 2002–ongoing. Image courtesy of the artist.

procedures, prompted by neoliberal policies: the criminalization of poverty and people of colour, with detrimental effects on marginalized communities.

Prison abolition activism is an extension of the scholarly work I did on the occupation of Palestine and the creative and radical responses to it via art and cinema. But I could feel that interest waning as I began to choose a different path, one that led me closer to home. I shifted the site of my research-activism from Palestine to prison abolition because it felt less dampening; I chose to care about it and it connected to local issues from the place where I live. Mobilizing around the occupation of Palestine was something I felt I had to do. As a Palestinian, it hurt. Emotionally, the process of organizing, writing, thinking and reading about what has been going on in Palestine as a result of the Israeli military occupation was exhausting. For one, it felt like I suffered from a kind of inherited trauma that was handed down to me from my courageous ancestors. Second, Palestine wasn't local enough for me. I've never been there, and I definitely don't plan on going there—not until every Palestinian refugee has the right of return to their own lands. I also don't want to interact with Israeli soldiers and witness, firsthand, the hardships Palestinians face every day. Third, there is a kind of sensitivity associated with inherited trauma, and I started to feel too vulnerable. I reached a limit with my openness to dialogue. I didn't have it in me to be generous at times when I had to respond to ignorant and racist remarks about Palestine or Palestinians. I started to feel dampened by my posture, which felt loud and defensive. I thus turned my research focus to the relation between art and activism, in the context of prison abolition, as a way to feel more joyful about work. Not in the sense of joy as producing happiness or pleasure, but in the Spinozist sense—joy as the empowering of oneself through action, rather than feeling the power of being acted upon. [8] Sumell and Wallace's project feels like that to me; it's made up of composite forces that are affectively contagious.

amend—the current legal penal structure. However, prison abolition is not simply about the banishment and complete destruction of all prisons. Prison abolition offers an alternate imagination for community creation and development. It challenges the most radical forms of being in the context of the communities we work at creating and sustaining, which grow from anti-capitalist, anti-colonial and anti-racist sentiments. Prison abolition activism imagines much more complex forms of life that divest from state-controlled capitalist economies invested in penal infrastructure and procedures. Prison abolition not only foresees the elimination of imprisonment, policing and surveillance, but it also offers new modes of organizing that take into consideration the complex problems of present-day capitalist society that lead to the antiquated solutions of incarceration and punishment.

[6] Bill C-10 is the omnibus crime bill passed by Prime Minister Stephen Harper and the Conservative party government that imposes strict mandatory minimum sentencing laws.

[7] This piece is dedicated to all student strikers in Montreal, who, as I write this now, have been on the streets for 110 days since the strike started in March 2012, against the university funding plan proposed by the Charest government in Quebec. This plan aims to gradually privatize education by cutting government spending, increasing tuition by 75%, and calling for an increase in corporate and private donations. The strike has gained much popularity and support since the passing of a draconian emergency

Sumell is building a house with Wallace, who along with Robert King and Albert Woodfox, comprise the Angola 3. [9] While King was released in 2001, Woodfox and Wallace remain imprisoned at Angola, or the Louisiana State Penitentiary (LSP) in solitary confinement. [10] Upon his release, King set out to inform and educate the public about Wallace and Woodfox's situation. In order to help the release of his comrades, King toured the US and gave moving lectures on the deteriorating situation of Woodfox and Wallace in solitary confinement. Sumell attended one of these lectures:

King came to Stanford [University] one day and he spoke to about twelve people, and at the end of his lecture we were all stunned—how is this possible? This can't be real. And nobody said anything. We were all made speechless by this experience, and then I found enough courage to raise my hand and ask what can we do. He said, 'Write my comrades.' And that's basically how it started. I started writing both Herman and Albert, and I still write to both of them. But I asked Herman that question.

The question she is referring to is the one that initiated *The House That Herman Built*. "People always ask how come I chose Herman," Sumell says, "I think it's less that I chose him, and more that his circumstances chose him. Because he went from being in solitary confinement to being in even deeper isolation in something called The Dungeon." Shockingly, this is an officially recognized confinement category by the administration at LSP. The dungeon, as Sumell explains, "is indicative of the conditions that Angola is happy to keep their prisoners in. I was watching Herman's condition dilapidate through his handwriting because of the conditions he was exposed to. We had only been writing at this point and his handwriting started to deteriorate and then his thoughts were less and less coherent. I thought, this is just really fucked up and I felt like I needed to do something."

Sumell was not only writing letters to Woodfox and Wallace then, but also organizing on behalf of

their release from prison. At this time, Sumell was pursuing a fine arts degree at Stanford, where she was assigned to speak to a professor of her choice about spatial relations and dream homes. Instead, she consulted with Wallace's personal advocates and lawyers, and with their support asked Wallace the question: "What kind of a house does a man who has lived in a six-foot-by-nine-foot cell for over 30 years dream of?" At first thought, I wondered about whether Sumell struggled with how appropriate a question this was to ask of someone in conditions worse than solitary confinement. I asked her what her initial thoughts were before approaching Wallace. She explained:

I'm not a lawyer and I'm not wealthy, but what I am is creative and what I have is my imagination. I thought I would share that with him. [And] one of the things about Herman and Albert is that you can actually ask them anything. Their relationship to the world, despite being confined to horrendous conditions, is so expansive and just really vast, which is why the prison keeps them in solitary confinement—they are marvels. They're a miracle against this punitive system. And nobody expected them to A) live this long, and B) survive these conditions without losing their minds. Not only have they triumphed over both of those challenges but they also did it through their ability to maintain an open mind and continue to organize inside the prison. They're amazing.

I wondered next what Wallace's reaction was to the question once she had sent it to him in a letter. According to Sumell:

He said something like, 'A house! I don't dream about no house. I am a revolutionary. I dream about the jungles, being in the jungles of Mexico, and fighting revolutionary battles.' And then I said, 'Herman you're 60.' And then he was like, 'Yeah, I guess you're right. I guess I can dream about a house now.' So, at first, he said no. And then he said yes. And then I started asking more and more questions. We started off with one drawing. And then I sent him a bunch of images

from contemporary architectural magazines. His response to that was, 'What the fuck are those?' He was not into contemporary architecture at all. It was by writing hundreds of letters that we started to develop the house itself, and the advocacy campaign around the house.

The advocacy campaign itself is inspiring. Sumell's exhibition features the CAD (computer-aided design) video of the house narrated by King; it functions as a virtual tour of the house based on information from Wallace's letters describing what his dream home looks like. The exhibit also features the house plans as they appear in the letter correspondence, as well as in blueprint format. It also includes an eerie wooden replica of Wallace's 6x9-foot cell, based on his original drawings that also appear in the letters, a maquette of the house, and other intricate details on posters, like the different types of flowers Wallace wants to grow in his garden. Sumell has toured with this exhibition over 27 times, and spoke at each one, trying to raise awareness about the Angola 3 and Wallace's situation. I asked Sumell what the exhibit did for her and the project, how it was useful and what it provided. She said:

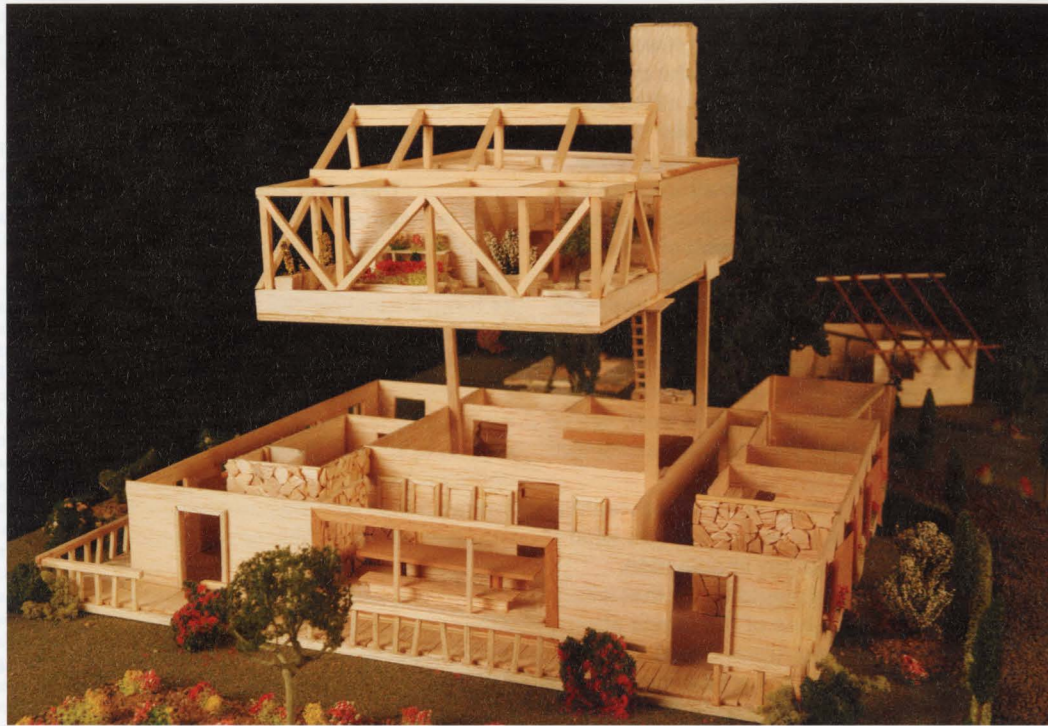
It helped me develop a vocabulary for exhibitions that is effective. It was the first time that I personally had ever gone to an exhibition and people cried, so that's showing me that it's meaningful and powerful visually. But more than anything it provided a safe platform to talk about the prison-industrial complex, torture in America, and the reality of Herman Wallace. Before I would exhibit, and before the project, I could talk about it until I was blue in the face. People's response would be something to the effect of, 'that's fucked up'—but there are 20,000 kids who starved to death today, there was a tsunami in Japan and a giant earthquake, and an apache helicopter bombed the shit out of Gaza yesterday. At that point, the capacity to absorb the immense tragedy of it all is limited. But when I start to talk about Herman's house as a project, it provides a little bit of distance from the tragedy and gives you a moment

law, Bill 78, which came into effect on 19 May 2012, aimed to suppress the daily and nightly demonstrations. Since its passing, over 1,500 protestors have been arrested and fined.

[8] Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, trans. Robert Hurley (San Francisco: City Lights, 1988).

[9] Targeted for their activism as members of the Black Panther Party (BPP) while incarcerated at Louisiana State Penitentiary, Wallace, Woodfox and King were moved to solitary confinement in 1972. Since then they have been referred to as the "Angola 3." The BPP chapter inside the prison functioned as a resource for inmates to organize against the dehumanizing and unlivable conditions experienced at LSP.

[10] As Jackie described it in our interview: "Angola is an 18,000-acre former slave plantation named after the country in Africa where the most profitable slaves came from. When you enter the grounds of Angola that history is really present and in your face. You see the 18,000 acres being farmed mostly by people of colour and you see most of the guards are white and on horseback. Statistics confirm this, it's not only experiential. Angola consists of 88% black inmates and a 100% white upper administration; it really accentuates the history of slavery in the present. Every physically abled-bodied prisoner is forced to work in Angola for 2-20 cents an hour under egregious conditions."



←
Model of Herman's House,
presented as part of
Jackie Sumell's Exhibition,
The House That Herman Built,
Artists Space (New York NY), 2007.
Image courtesy of Mizue Aizeki.

to reflect on what's being said, and often you can actually accept the tragedy, and connect to it. The tragedy of Wallace's situation doesn't just become part of this barrage of sad; it provides hope in a lot of ways, as simple as that. And so, people, by nature, prefer to connect to hope than tragedy.

Sumell refers to the "barrage of sad" as a kind of sensory overload or an emotional bombardment on the body, and her goal is to really interrupt the numbness that is felt when faced with a world full of tragic stories. This numbness creates a powerlessness that Sumell wants to amend: "To interrupt that, you have to provide people with some sort of hope so that they can engage through a different channel. *The House That Herman Built* is close to the public intervention art work I did prior to this, which [also] had the intention of interrupting this kind of numbness."

Sumell spins Wallace's story in a way that interrupts this numbness and inactivity by inspiring a shift in thought when it comes

to dealing with tragedy. Influenced heavily by her community in New Orleans' 7th Ward, she calls this kind of approach "magidy, equal parts magic and tragedy—they co-exist in that way where there's no distinction and no border." Fruitful situations do arise from tragic circumstances. *The House That Herman Built* is remarkable for how it has been able to create and sustain a movement, as well as what it has been able to do for Sumell and the community of the 7th Ward, otherwise known as the most violent neighbourhood in New Orleans. She bought her own house in the area (where Wallace grew up) intended to be the project's headquarters but has now turned it into an unofficial community centre for youth living in the ward. As an extension of *The House That Herman Built*, the 7th Ward community has become the other major focus of Sumell's life, more specifically the kids there. Talking with Sumell I could see that her position as an artist extends beyond the art context itself and is part of a process of figuring out a healthy and vital lifestyle

that is an extension of autonomous community development and sustainability.

Sumell recalls feeling pretty attached to the idea of staying in New Orleans and specifically in the 7th Ward. *The House That Herman Built* brought her to the neighborhood, and the kids confirmed her decision to stay. As she says:

My intention is to create a sustainable, healthy way of life, and the kids were really the directional force in that decision-making process. I didn't become an artist because I wanted to be a famous artist. It's not a sustainable lifestyle in this community, and this community is more important to me than an art career. It doesn't mean that art is any less meaningful, it just means in today's economic climate there's not a chance in hell that I can survive as an artist and still maintain my commitment to this community, and to the kids in this neighborhood. I am completely fine with that. I actually feel really blessed that I found myself in the 7th Ward. The

acceptance process here for me was expedited by the fact that I moved in two days before Hurricane Gustav, and had the experience of doing relief work after Katrina, so I was able to work with the community pretty quickly and I think it was simply like, "she's alright." I was careful about how I came into the neighborhood. I didn't want to come off as an outsider with a colonial attitude, telling people what to do and why they should accept me. It was a process. I had to earn that welcome.

She's a rare artist in this way—using her skills to affectively engage with community-based organizing. *The House That Herman Built* can't be summed up by a message or a simplified political position. The project challenges rhetorical modes of composite representation. It creates an indeterminate process without resolve. For example, the objects produced for the exhibit on Wallace's house are organized in a way that connects to the movement of prison abolition, and of getting Wallace out of prison. [10] They don't represent the trauma; they enliven the urgency of the present, and are part of an "ecology of practice," [11] in which the audience feels the magic of the prospect of freeing Wallace, as much as the tragedy that results from racialized incarceration and the violence of neoslavery penal systems. [12] As philosopher and scientist Isabelle Stengers argues, an ecology of practice can be understood as "the possibilities of transforming this 'economy of modern worth,' of making those practices present that are likely to be of interest and which justify themselves on the basis of other criteria." [13] These criteria are constructed by and through one's own capacity to act, to reduce the effects of being acted upon. In this case, Sumell's description of magidy resembles the Spinozist position on joy that I find useful when taking up the question, again, of what art can do for the political without an excessive focus on representation. Sumell's work exemplifies the process whereby the construction of one's own desires—how we connect to our life in the present so as to disrupt what leaves us numb—

provides a gateway to a renewed "belief in the world." [14] In the context of present-day tragedy brought on by neocolonial foreign policies and austerity, art production, as an ecology of practice, helps produce new modes of valuation that give new or different meanings to how relations are organized on the ground, and how through those relations work and process is evaluated.

Moved by the project, Sumell's articulation of it, and how it plays out in the context of our political present—economically motivated increased rates of incarceration—*The House That Herman Built* pushed me to ask how, as teacher, writer and researcher I include prison abolition activism in my own creative milieu. In the interview, I remarked:

I've been searching for this kind of project for a long time. Not that I knew what I was searching for but knowing that I needed to know something like this existed, because it's just so hard to think about how you can connect, and feel hopeful in the midst of this "barrage of sad." Herman's situation is a really hard one, one that has lasted for a long period of time. And he's only one of many whose stories resemble this. Others have contacted you about helping out, I mean Herman and Albert have asked you to stop telling people to write them because they can't keep up with all the letters they're getting! It's incredible how effective this exhibit and your organizing efforts have been. How are you feeling about all that?

To which Sumell responded:

I think it's amazing. I am at the head of a ship that is really steered by Herman's decisions, his relationship to the public and his visibility. It's all well and good, but the ultimate goal of this project is to create a grassroots campaign that is international and engaged in changing the prison system. That's a big one. So, we're just a little stone in the ocean and hopefully, as Robert King says, we'll make some ripples and we don't know where those ripples are going to go. They could fizzle out or they could be the tsunami over the next

supermax prison, which would be rad.

Excessively moved and stimulated by Sumell's energy and thoughtfulness, I had to ask her: "How do we do what you do from where we are? How do we take whatever is inspiring us with this project, and, as you mention, make it expansive, to make the politics around it sound off somewhere else?" She replied:

In order to make that experience genuine, you really just have to ask what your super power is in this lifetime. You might not even know the answer, as a word, but there might be a sense or a feeling. Once you can trust that answer, just go forward with it. I felt compelled to do something. It just so happens that I am an artist. I don't have much more than my imagination, which is a lot, a big gift. That's what I have to share and I'm really happy to do it. And in some ways, it has to be collaborative, and it's about sharing, and it's about empowering yourself, through your own imagination. A lot of art making happens, here, in this house, with the kids, on a really small level, but that doesn't make it any more or any less artistic because it's not in a gallery. In a lot of ways, it's more meaningful.

What makes an ecology of practice a meaningful approach is its ability to shift our posture to one that is molded by joy, not distress or defense. As Deleuze (reading Spinoza) suggests, "when we encounter a body that agrees with our nature, one whose relation compounds with ours, we may say that its power is added to ours; that passions that affect us are those of joy, and our power of acting is increased or enhanced." [15] At the end of our interview, Sumell echoes this statement by explaining how she is

"responsible not only to Herman, but to people like yourself who are moved by the story and think they can do something like this. There was no logic to this being my path in life. I was open and accepting of the fact that I might not need to go in the direction that I was going, and so this kind of work is accessible to everyone under those same guises, or same circumstances." [16]

[11] Mansour and Kilibarda.

[12] Stengers 2010

[13] The present-day prison system stems from a historical and structural model that dates back to the abolition of slavery. As Angela Davis has written, "There was no reference to imprisonment in the US Constitution until the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment declared chattel slavery unconstitutional: Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction." Angela Davis, *Are Prisons Obsolete?* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003), 28.

[14] Stengers, *Cosmopolitics*, 48.

[15] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. H. Tomlinson and R. Galeta (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989).

[16] Deleuze, *Spinoza*, 27, 28.

[17] Many thanks to Lucas Freeman and cheyanne turions for their rigorous edits and constructive comments on this article.



THE BACK
LIFE

TAKE BACK THE NIGHT –

In 1976,
Claudia Caputi, a seventeen-year-old woman, was gang-raped in Rome. In a rare move for women in Italy, she reported the rape to Rome's Fascist police.

A year later, on 31 March 1977,
when her case went to trial, Claudia was gang-raped again by the same group of men.

This time
her whole body was slashed with razors in an attempt to keep her silent.

Within hours,
fifteen thousand women mobilized in Rome's Appio-Tuscolano neighborhood, where Claudia, the rapists and police all lived. The women dressed like the sex workers common to the district, both to declare solidarity with le puttane and to protect themselves in the crowd's uniformity.

“No more mothers, wives and daughters:
let's destroy the families!”

was the cry heard in the street.

Carrying torches, the women broke through the police lines and marched to the Fascist Party Headquarters.

For the Italian feminists, this was not just a march for Claudia, but for all women who were survivors of violence.

This was the first incarnation of
TAKE BACK THE NIGHT.

–BROOKLYN APRIL 2010

Tonight
we march again, to refuse the violence that continues to force us to be housewives and fuck-toys, mothers and daddy's girls, to refuse to understand women's oppression in the private sphere as a simple cultural or ideological matter.

We address

CAPITALISM WHITE SUPREMACY PATRIARCHY

as one intrinsically interconnected system.

We know that
women, like people of color in New York City and abroad,
are used as natural resources the rich exploit to stay ahead.

We realize that
ATOMIZATION and **ISOLATION**
are integral to this plan and that this is why

public space is men's space.

Tonight
our desires are our own, our anger is our own, our violence is our
OWN.

Tonight
we refuse to be women.

We all wear skirts and black to symbolize the
subversion of both womanhood and of mourning,
to destroy that which destroys us.

CARCERAL FEMINISM

– The Failure of Sex Work Prohibition

Robyn Maynard

Anti-prostitution women's groups – comprised of women morally and politically opposed to the very existence of the sex trade – have a far-reaching influence in the Canadian political climate that can be traced back to the colonization of Canada. While these groups often promote themselves as advancing an abolitionist feminist agenda, prohibitionist feminism is a more accurate descriptor, and will be used throughout this essay. [1] In the present writing, I will argue that the strategies of prohibitionist feminists do not serve the health and well-being of sex workers, but actually result in the criminalization of the very people they purport to protect. In contrast, the

arguments in this essay promote a model of solidarity with sex workers, in support of their own movements for health, security and dignity within the sex trade.

Sex workers are marginalized in Canadian society – they face staggering rates of violence and stigmatization that affect their ability to access health, social and protective services, and many (especially street-based workers) are subject to heavy police repression. Trans*, racialized, and Indigenous sex workers, as well as sex workers who use drugs, face these forms of marginalization at an even higher level, and experience higher levels of policing and incarceration. This reality is largely acknowledged by sex work activists and by most prohibitionists. [2] The issue that divides sex work activists from prohibitionists is the determination of the necessary steps to abolish violence towards sex workers. Prohibitionists believe that sex work, in and of itself, is inherently violent and exploitative, and propose instead that a carceral, prohibitionist approach must be taken to eliminate sex work itself. This model runs

contrary to struggles for labour rights, migrants rights, decriminalization and self-determination which are currently being waged by sex work activists, as the means to end the high rates of violence and repression in the industry. As sex work in Canada is currently under intense public scrutiny, as well as political and legal upheaval, it is a feminist issue of the utmost importance, with high stakes in terms of the lives and safety of sex workers. Sex workers' voices are not always represented in these debates; however, organizations run by and for sex workers such as POWER (Prostitutes of Ottawa/Gatineau Work, Educate, Resist) and legal allies such as the Pivot Legal Society have produced a wealth of information giving space for sex workers to describe their realities and needs. This information was assembled as part of sustained efforts by sex workers to prioritize their voices in the public domain as the pressure has mounted in the highly mediated societal debates surrounding their work. Given this context, it is more necessary than ever to demonstrate how prohibitionist feminism's alignment with the moral right's carceral approach to sex work in Canada results in significant harm to sex

workers' safety and autonomy. Indeed, much stands to be gained by redefining a truly abolitionist feminism with the goal of abolishing violence against sex workers, in solidarity with the safety, needs and self-determination of sex workers themselves.

Anti-Sex-Work Women's Groups & Incarceration of Sex Workers in Early Canada: A Historical Account

Prohibitionist groups in early Canadian history were active collaborators with a carceral agenda focused on the prohibition of sex work, which resulted in arrests, imprisonment and coerced rehabilitation programs for many sex workers. Many prohibitionist women's groups were part a growing trend of criminalization as a means to curb so-called social vices and impose control over women's sexuality. This had the corresponding outcome of policing lower-class women, Indigenous women, immigrants, and women in the sex trade.

In the 1880s, numerous women's groups joined forces with various Christian authorities, such as the Society for the Protection of Women and Children, in calling for the prohibition of the sex trade, which was actualized in 1892 with the creation of the Criminal Code of Canada. Various aspects of these laws surrounded "vagrancy" and targeted "common prostitutes, people living by the avails of prostitution, and any night walker not giving a satisfactory account of themselves," according to Constance Backhouse. [3] At the level of magistrate courts, hundreds of women were tried and convicted under these new laws. Indeed, as Backhouse further notes, "possible prostitution offences constituted an overwhelming proportion of women's crimes" from the 1860s to the mid-1890s. [4] In the early twentieth century, a strong lobby of women's anti-prostitution groups in Canada and overseas, in collaboration with Christian Protestant purity groups, was increasingly vocal that women in the sex trade needed to be saved. The means of accomplishing this goal was by arresting them and the men who were their clients. Michaela Freund has documented one such group, the Vancouver

Council of Women, which was deeply implicated in the process of criminalizing women in the sex trade (and lower-class women more generally). They argued for more social control and stricter curfew laws, lobbied for more police supervision of women in the public sphere, and painted women as victims, while also making them subject to questioning, detention and arrest when out after nightfall. This lobby spurred the creation of a new police division called the Women's Protective Division, also supported by the Housewives League of British Columbia. This division started in 1912 and peaked in 1929, and was staffed by women who did preventative work and home visits in order to stop women from entering into the sex trade. Joan Sangster, who studied one of Ontario's main reformatories, the Mercer Reformatory, demonstrates that many sex workers were also sent against their will into rehabilitation centres. These reformatories were not qualitatively different from prison, as women were held against their will, forced to perform domestic labour, and further, "only a minority of the Mercer files indicate that women clearly abandoned or wanted to abandon prostitution." [5]

Early prohibitionist groups also sympathized with racialized anti-immigrant sentiments, which served to control the movements of immigrant men and women, and women in the sex trade, under the rubric of fighting what was then known as the "white slave trade," or the "white slave traffic." Though there was much pressure and social panic surrounding this topic at the time, Mariana Valverde notes in her research that no evidence of such trafficking was ever discovered following this campaign. The National Committee for the Suppression of the White Slave Traffic, which was supported by the National Council of Women, identified Chinese and Japanese men as the purported leading organizers of the "white slave trade." Renisa Mawani's research also demonstrates that the so-called white slave trade did not in fact relate solely to white women, but was also mobilized to restrict Chinese women from migrating to Canada, as they were seen to be at risk of becoming prostitutes. This panic was not without context, but became

a rescue structure hijacked for the political purposes of the conservative right. Herbert Stephens, Conservative Member of Parliament and critic of Asian immigration, used the threat of women being "imported for immoral purposes" [6] as a tool in a larger anti-immigrant agenda, at a cost lived by immigrants and women in the sex trade.

Indigenous women were also adversely affected and criminalized by being labeled as potential victims of the sex trade. For example, the Vancouver Council of Social Agendas also supported the Women's Protective Division of policing in the late 1930s due to concerns with supervision of "half breeds" who were perceived to be in danger of entering prostitution. [7] In British Columbia, many Indigenous women arrested for prostitution-related offences were banished from cities and towns and sent back to their reserves.

Abolitionists, while purportedly having sex workers' best interests at heart, have historically collaborated with carceral prohibitionist approaches towards sex work in the imposition of a particular kind of social and sexual role for women in society, with devastating results lived by sex workers, immigrants and Indigenous women.

Solidarity vs. Saviours: Decriminalization and Labour Rights, or Rescue and Incarceration?

Unfortunately, we do not have access to the voices of the majority of the sex workers who were forced against their will into "rehabilitation centres" and prisons at the behest of prohibitionists, the church and legislators in early Canadian history. In the current epoch, however, sex workers have been increasingly empowered to organize themselves, deciding to out themselves in order to elaborate their needs, rather than being represented as voiceless victims by others. Organizations run by and for sex workers, such as Maggie's, POWER, Stella, and Sex Workers United Against Violence (SWUAV), presently work with thousands of sex workers across Canada – with some including health services, peer-education, community research projects and legal advocacy

the term "women" used by most prohibitionists, who define sex work as a violence towards women in a way that often does not include transgendered women. Though they often acknowledge the racial and class-based reality of violence towards sex workers, prohibitionists often leave out the realities of the extremely high rates of violence lived by Trans* sex workers, as well as the existence of males in the sex trade. However, proper treatment of this issue is beyond the scope of this essay.

[3] Constance Backhouse, "Nineteenth-Century Canadian Prostitution Law: Reflection of a Discriminatory Society" *Social History/Histoire sociale* 18, no. 36 (1985): 394.

[4] *Ibid.*, 397.

[5] Joan Sangster, *Regulating Girls and Women: Sexuality, Family, and the Law in Ontario, 1920-1960* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2001), 109.

[6] Renisa Mawani, *Colonial Proximities: Crossracial Encounters and Juridical Truths in British Columbia, 1871-1921*. (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2009), 79.

[7] Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Soap, Light and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 249.

[1] Some sex workers, especially sex workers of colour, find the application of the term "abolitionist feminist," which references the abolition of slavery, to be offensive and inaccurate in its application to sex work and prefer to refer to it as fundamentalist, prohibitionist or carceral feminism.

[2] One important exception is the narrow definition of

—and have since their inception been outspoken about the lives, realities and needs of sex workers. Sex workers and prohibitionists both identify violence as one of the largest threats to sex workers' well-being, but continue to view the process by which to end this violence in fundamentally contradictory ways, with correspondingly contradictory outcomes. Though often accused by prohibitionists of glamorizing sex work, sex work activists of all backgrounds and income levels have argued that stigmatization, police repression, racism, misogyny and a societal disregard for the lives of sex workers all contribute to the violence that they experience. Indeed, sex workers across Canada organize annual vigils and marches on 17 December to commemorate the International Day Against Violence Against Sex Workers. Sex worker activists view the harm involved in sex work as rooted in larger systemic injustices rather than as being caused by sex work itself. Because of this, sex workers in Canada have increasingly identified the laws criminalizing their work as one of the major barriers to their security, and indeed as one of the main causes of the high levels of violence committed against them.

Sex workers are currently leading two major court cases that identify the carceral approach to sex work as violating their basic right to security and blocking their ability to ensure safe working conditions. The case of Terri Jean Bedford, Amy Lebovitch and Valerie Scott, with the collaboration of sex workers across Canada, argued this successfully to the Ontario Superior Court in 2009. They argued that the very conditions and activities currently subject to legal prohibitions — such as the ability to work indoors (the “bawdy house” law); hire security, receptionists and/or management (the “living off the avails” law); work in groups; and negotiate services and rates clearly with clients in public locations (the “communication” law) — are precisely the factors that sex workers have identified as effective in reducing harm and violence in their working lives. Justice Susan Himel ruled in favour, a judgment that was seconded unanimously by five judges at

the Ontario Court of Appeal. Two of the five judges stated in strong terms, in concurrence with Himel, that the laws criminalizing negotiations between women and clients on the street level exposed them to undue risks without just cause.

Sex workers working and living in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside are also mounting a Supreme Court challenge of the laws criminalizing sex workers, third parties (receptionists, security) and clients. An alliance of several dozen street-level sex workers called the Sex Workers United Against Violence (SWUAV), represented by the Pivot Legal Society, have on several occasions publicly decried the negative effects of the criminalization of negotiations between sex workers and their clients. Numerous government-ordered publications have identified the criminalization of these client-worker interactions as major factors in the existing conditions of violence towards sex workers. [8]

Indigenous sex workers, both individuals and groups, have also spoken out against the criminalization of sex work, specifically as it has affected Indigenous women, who face disproportionately high rates of violence. Jamie Lee Hamilton, a well-known transgendered Indigenous sex work activist, has stated that the 1980s police repression of women and clients on the street level in Vancouver's well-lit urban areas displaced them to the Downtown Eastside in the first place, creating unsafe conditions that have contributed to the demonstrably high rates of missing and murdered Indigenous women working and living in that neighbourhood. [9] She herself was arrested and charged under bawdy house legislation for her creation of “Grandma's House,” a safe indoor area for women to bring their clients during a massive spike in violence in the late 1980s. The Aboriginal Sex Worker Education and Outreach Project, a group of Indigenous sex workers of all genders in Toronto, have stated publicly that “the root of this violence [towards Indigenous sex workers] comes from colonization [...] and that there is no better time to work around decriminalization, but it is only a step towards (de) colonizing.” [10]

In a current example of the power of solidarity (as opposed to prohibition), a groundbreaking report by Kate Shannon of the British Columbia Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS released in May 2012 detailed the increases in perceived safety lived by sex workers in Vancouver following an unofficial tolerance in women's shelters allowing sex workers to bring their clients indoors, with the following stated rules: “No dealing drugs, no violence and no pressuring other women into doing something they don't want to do.” [11] Women's shelters decided to listen to sex workers' needs instead of imposing their own views on the industry, and correspondingly sex workers' safety improved. The claims made by sex workers that decriminalization would increase their safety have been substantiated in practice elsewhere, as well. In New Zealand, the only country to have completely decriminalized sex work, a study commissioned by the Ministry of Justice demonstrated that sex workers reported feeling less vulnerable to violence, that levels of exploitation were low, and that 60% of sex workers felt they had a greater ability to report violence under the new Prostitution Reform Act than without it. The New Zealand Prostitutes Collective have also stated that access to labour rights allows them to better fight incidents of violence and exploitation at their places of work. By contrast, modern day prohibitionism remains a form of “rescue” feminism rather than one based in solidarity. There are no prohibitionist groups entirely made up of women currently in the sex trade, nor do they take leadership from current by-and-for sex worker organizations. Because of this lack of solidarity, the notions held by most sex workers regarding their desires for safety and freedom from violence in their lives differ markedly from both historical and current methods undertaken by prohibitionists to ensure sex workers' safety. Though sex workers have organized to speak for themselves in ways that did not exist in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, prohibitionists actively discount or ignore the increasingly numerous voices of sex workers who wish to remain in the

[8] Fraser Committee, *Fraser Report*, commissioned by Ministry of Justice of Canada (1985); *Street Prostitution: Assessing the Impact of the Law*, Department of Justice of Canada (1989); *Étude sur les violences envers les prostituées à Montréal*. Rapport de recherche soumis au ministère fédérale de la justice (June 1994).

[9] Robyn Maynard, “Jamie Lee Hamilton: Up Close and Personal,” *ConStellation*, Special Issue on Human Rights (publication forthcoming).

[10] Indigenous People in the Sex Trade: Our Lives, Our Bodies, Our Realities, Aboriginal Sex Work Education and Outreach Project (ASWEOP), February 14, 2012.

[11] Susan Lazaruk, “Vancouver Study: Sex Trade Workers Feel Safest When Working Inside Supported Housing,” *The Province*, 9 May 2012 (online; accessed 18 June 2012).

sex trade but want to do so without violence.

At its extreme, the prohibitionist perspective denies that sex workers themselves can differentiate between forced and voluntary sex work. In their statement of facts submitted in *Bedford vs. Canada*, the Women's Coalition for the Abolition of Prostitution, a group made up of prohibitionists from across Canada, [12] stated both that prostitution, in and of itself, and regardless of working conditions, is harmful to women, and that “the challenged laws do not cause or materially contribute to men's violence against women.” [13] They argued that it was not possible for women to work more safely indoors and that pimps and clients are interchangeable as offenders. Justice Susan Himel, unchallenged by the five judges at the Ontario Court of Appeal, found much of the evidence provided by prohibitionists experts to be “troubling,” asserting that some of their expert witnesses had made sweeping statements not substantiated by their research. Specifically, Himel found that certain statements about sex workers were actually based on research about trafficked women, claims that the average age of recruitment into prostitution was 14 years old were based on faulty research, and the argument that serial killers also targeted women indoors to be unqualified. [14] Similarly, in May 2012, Quebec's state-funded women's organization the *Conseil du statut de la femme* released a report claiming that all sex workers, including those who state that they worked consensually, were in fact psychologically damaged and suffering from long-term emotional problems because of their work, repeating the already-discredited statistic that the average age of entry into the sex trade is 14 years old. This state-funded body then called for laws directly in opposition to those advocated for by sex workers across Canada, and demanded that the government maintain the laws criminalizing indoor sex work, and for the criminalization of all clients as a means to protect women in the sex trade. In these examples, the prohibitionist perspective actively rallies against conditions that sex workers themselves claim would

make their working conditions safer and less exploitative.

Moral Impositions, Unwanted Solutions: The Criminalization of Clients, and How It Has Failed Sex Workers

Contemporary prohibitionists differ from their historical counterparts in that they no longer directly advocate for the incarceration or forced rehabilitation of sex workers as the means by which to end the existence of the sex trade. However, their approach to abolishing the sex trade remains necessarily carceral; since the purchasing itself is seen as a violent act, all clients are seen as abusers and assaulters, and all workers as victims. Abolitionist feminists in Canada advocate for the criminalization and repression of clients as a means by which to eradicate sex work. This carceral approach is known popularly as the “Swedish” model, because in 1999 Sweden became the first country in the world to define prostitution as violence towards women, and attempted to eradicate prostitution by arresting clients. Since its inception, the Swedish model has been promoted worldwide and enacted in Norway, South Africa and South Korea, and discussed by law-makers in India, France, Estonia, Finland, Croatia, the Philippines, Spain, Italy, the United Kingdom and Canada. Abolitionist feminists in Canada are part of an international push to enact this model of prohibition as part of an American initiative that began under the Bush administration in 2003, the *Trafficking in Persons (TIP)* index, which defines sex work as de-facto trafficking and has called for the criminalization of clients worldwide. The TIP is a three-tier system grading countries on their purported success or failure in what it deems to be combatting trafficking, and it wields significant political influence. In effect, however, it most often pressures client countries to criminalize (or increase criminalization) of the sex trade by means of raids and shutting down sex work establishments, rewarding them for increased repression of sex work and illegal migration, while also punishing those who score lowest on the TIP index with the threat of

losing American foreign aid. Though Sweden is lauded by prohibitionist feminists for taking legislative steps to criminalize clients, its stated purpose of eliminating the sex industry has been an abject failure: “We cannot give any unambiguous answer to [the question of whether prostitution has increased or decreased]. At most, we can discern that street prostitution is slowly returning, after swiftly disappearing in the wake of the law.” [15]

Whether it actually works to eliminate sex work or not, this form of rescue feminism is disconnected from the needs of sex workers. Indeed, law enforcement attempts to focus on the criminalization of clients has had harmful consequences in sex workers in Canada over the past few decades. Two different reports commissioned by the Ministry of Justice of Canada, in 1989 and 1994, [16] specified that there was a direct link between the criminalization of clients, lowered working conditions and increased violence against sex workers due to rushed negotiations and sex workers' loss of bargaining power. In Montreal in 2001, police conducted massive client sweeps, and Montreal-based sex workers organization *Stella* documented a threefold rise in violent incidents, and a fivefold rise of incidents with a deadly weapon, over a three-month period at the height of the sweeps.

With the gradual international implementation of the Swedish model, the working conditions and relative safety of women at all levels of the sex industry have been found to be considerably reduced. According to a study by the Norwegian Ministry of Justice and the Police, street-level sex workers in Sweden have reported feeling less secure and at greater risk of violence, and indeed face an actual increase. Women working indoors in their own spaces have been faced with a deterioration in working conditions; though selling sex does not in and of itself criminalize sex workers, many of the means by which women can improve their safety, such as working together for security and passing on information about clients, are criminalized, as cited in a report by Susanne Dodillet and Petra Östergren. Conditions and safety are also adversely affected as working indoors remains illegal and

[12] The Native Women's Association of Canada, the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies, The Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres, Vancouver Rape Relief Society, Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes, Concertation des luttes contre l'exploitation sexuelle (CLES), and Regroupement québécois des centres d'aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractère sexuel.

[13] Fay Faraday and Janine Benedict, *Factum for the Intervenor Women's Coalition* (online; accessed 18 June 2012).

[14] Importantly, one of the expert witnesses to have his evidence discredited was Richard Poulin, who publicly identifies as part of Quebec's leading prohibitionist group, the *Concertation des luttes contre l'exploitation sexuelle*.

landlords are required to terminate leases immediately upon discovery of a tenant's occupation or risk being charged criminally. This often leads to extremely unstable housing situations for those who wish to control their own work environments. The alignment of feminist prohibitionists with the right-wing carceral approach to sex work does nothing to further the goal of actually abolishing sex work. Instead, the implementation of this model uses the law in a manner that augments, rather than abolishes, the violence, stigmatization and vulnerability faced by sex workers.

Trafficking Realities: Prohibition vs. Migrant's Rights

It is difficult to separate the prohibitionist feminist push for the criminalization of clients from various "anti-trafficking" campaigns, since they are used so interchangeably both by the conservative right and by prohibitionist feminists. Indeed, the topic of trafficking is so often leveraged as a political tool that it can be difficult to address. However, the mobilization of anti-trafficking campaigns unevenly affects migrant women, and therefore needs to be treated distinctly. A major focus of much prohibitionist rhetoric is that of so-called trafficked women, and indeed the earlier timeline demonstrates how the spectre of trafficking has been mobilized in the service of anti-immigrant agendas, at the expense of migrant women and sex workers. Though the definition of trafficking in the Criminal Code of Canada can be simplified to forced labour combined with forced movement, trafficking as referred to in conservative rhetoric and prohibitionist feminisms generally refers to the forced sexual labour of women and children (in a manner that often does not differentiate between adult women and children). Highly exploitative labour conditions are a reality faced by many migrants in all sectors in Canada, both for those here legally through temporary work programs, as well as for those living and working illegally. Because of their precarious status in Canada, migrant workers often fear reporting workplace exploitation for fear of being deported. This is especially true in the context of an occupation

which is itself deemed to be illegal. Though statistics on trafficking realities vary widely and are difficult to quantify, [17] actual reported judicial cases of migrant men or women being forced into sexual labour, confined against their will, or having their wages expropriated, are quite low in Canada; for example, the RCMP reported 5 criminal convictions for human trafficking between 2009 and 2010. Even amidst this reality, there were several highly mediated and expensive anti-trafficking raids targeting massage parlours throughout the 2000s. After mass arrests and confiscation of property, it was extremely rare for any of the sex workers present to be determined to be trafficked. [18]

The urgency of fighting trafficking continues to permeate the cultural and political landscapes, perpetuated both by prohibitionists, conservative anti-immigrant politicians and law enforcement officials. Sex work prohibitionists in Canada, the United States and Sweden, define all migrant sex workers as victims of trafficking, because of their insistence that no one is able to consent to working in the sex industry. Due to this, prohibitionist feminists, including the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women and the Women's Coalition for the Abolition of Prostitution, advocate for the criminalization of all clients as a means of ending trafficking, since they do not differentiate between voluntary and forced workers. This discourse is promoted by Stephen Harper's Conservative government, who, Criminal Code notwithstanding, defined prostitution as sexual exploitation in their 2011 election platform. With new powers instilled by the Omnibus crime bill (C-10), and the so-called "Protecting Vulnerable Foreign Nationals Against Trafficking, Abuse and Exploitation" section, immigration officers are now able to refuse would-be migrant women work permits if they are deemed to be "vulnerable to sexual exploitation." [19] According to the bill, so-called unskilled labourers, along with exotic dancers, are considered potential victims of human trafficking, are routinely subjected to suspicion, and can be barred from entering Canada on a permit. This can be understood as nothing other than a contemporary,

gendered iteration of prohibitionist language employed by politicians in the early twentieth century to justify banning immigrants from the country.

Though anti-trafficking, anti-client raids targeting the sex trade are a reality in Canada, this phenomenon is more common in other countries, specifically in Sweden and in countries beholden to the United States' TIP, such as Thailand, Cambodia and South Korea. Indeed, so-called anti-trafficking repression has shown horrific results for migrant women in Sweden and Norway. In these two countries, increased police repression due to enacting anti-trafficking and anti-prostitution laws immediately led to massive increases in arrests and the deportation of women living there illegally. Historically, sex workers have been subject to police raids and arrests in the name of public morality, but in instances such as these, raids are now also perpetuated in the name of fighting trafficking. Montreal has also seen an increase in law enforcement officials entering massage parlours claiming to seek trafficking victims, and arrests and deportations based on these grounds have already occurred, as documented by Montreal sex worker organization Stella, which has thousands of contacts with sex workers each year. Sex workers generally find these raids traumatic, which, alongside strict immigration rules, discourages migrant women actually experiencing extortion or other rights violations from turning for assistance to police or social services, for fear of arrest or deportation.

Impediments to Self-Determination and Safety for Migrant Sex Workers: A Broader Look

Carceral solutions to trafficking suit the needs of prohibitionist feminists in their push to criminalize clients, and suit the needs of conservative governments in continually restricting otherwise legal methods of entering the country. However, the prohibitionist definition of trafficking fails to address many impediments to the self-determination and safety of migrant women in the sex trade. In equating all migrant sex workers as trafficking victims, it becomes extremely difficult to reach

[15] Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare, *Prostitution in Sweden 2007*, (online; accessed 18 June 2012).

[16] Department of Justice of Canada, *Street Prostitution: Assessing the Impact of the Law*, (1989); Ministère de la justice du Canada, *Étude sur les violences envers les prostituées à Montréal*, (June 1994). These reports also document the harmful effects of criminalizing sex workers.

[17] Indeed, the Canadian government itself has stated both that the scope of trafficking in Canada is difficult if not impossible to ascertain in the present: "Currently, there is a lack of reliable, quantitative data on the scope and nature of human trafficking in Canada and around the world." Statistics Canada, *Towards the Development of a National Data Collection Framework to Measure Trafficking in Persons*, (online; accessed 14 June 2012).

[18] This is discussed in more detail in Robyn Maynard, "Trafficking, the 'Foreign-Stripper Problem' and Migrant Sex Workers' Rights in Canada," *Constellation*, Special Issue on Human Rights (Publication forthcoming).

[19] *Background: Safe Streets and Communities Act*, Department of Justice Canada (online; accessed 18 June 2012).

women who are in situations of actual captivity and expropriation, rare as these situations may be. In a 2012 paper, Ann Jordan affirms that in Sweden, fear of arrest and deportation has had the added effect of dissuading the most vulnerable from accessing social services and authorities if they indeed require help. Jordan's research, along with that of Bob Wallace, Principal Policy Officer of the Prostitution Licensing Authority of Queensland, also demonstrates that anti-client laws in Sweden have made clients unlikely and unable to report places where women did indeed seem to be trafficked, due to fear of incriminating themselves.

Several countries in which anti-trafficking campaigns are mobilized on a larger scale, such as Thailand and Cambodia, have sex-worker-led campaigns against anti-trafficking efforts pushed onto them by prohibitionists, conservative politicians and law enforcement. Empower Foundation, a sex workers' organization based in Thailand, recently released a report entitled *Hit & Run*, which documents the rights abuses caused by anti-trafficking efforts on sex workers, migrant sex workers and actual victims of trafficking. They opened their document with the following statement: "If this was a story of a man setting out on an adventure to find a treasure and slay a dragon to make his family rich and safe, he would be the hero. But I am not a man. I am a woman and so the story changes [...] I am not brave and daring. I am not resourceful and strong. Instead I am called illegal, disease spreader, prostitute, criminal or trafficking victim." [20] Prohibitionist feminism, in focusing on fighting trafficking by means of the criminalization of the purchase sex, does not examine the root causes that create exploitative conditions for migrant workers, including sex workers. In addressing trafficking itself, as a phenomenon, it is important to recognize the underlying conditions which allow it to exist. Nandita Sharma, author of *Home Economics: The Making of Migrant Labour in Canada*, argues that restrictive immigration controls create conditions in which traffickers can extort wages from and control the

movement of undocumented people living and working in Canada, and that the exploitation of migrant labour is made possible by Canada's immigration system. Though actual forced labour appears to be a rare occurrence, poor working conditions are endemic to migrants with precarious immigration status. Determining some people to be "legal" and others to be "illegal" in and of itself creates a pool of workers vulnerable to exploitation; they do not have rights, making it impossible for them to defend themselves. Indeed, it would be much less possible to force undocumented migrants to work under duress without threats of deportation and the hiding of passports. Effective anti-trafficking efforts would require undocumented peoples to be living without fear, and to have equal access to labour rights – as such, allowing for freedom of movement across borders. Migrant justice movements, in contrast with feminist prohibitionists, operate in opposition to the carceral model that perpetuates the vulnerability of migrants. Instead, migrant justice groups and organizations such as the Immigrant Workers' Centre, Solidarity Across Borders and No One Is Illegal work with directly affected migrants, and address barriers to safety and security by advocating for access for all to social and health services, shelters and protection.

Towards a Model of Accountability and Solidarity with Sex Workers

The fact that some experience the sex trade itself as a form of violence is contested neither by sex workers nor by prohibitionists. Also, both sex workers and prohibitionists affirm that nobody should be forced or pressured into remaining in the sex trade against their will, and should be assisted in leaving the industry if they so desire. The laws in Canada's Criminal Code which outlaw forced labour, exploitation, confinement, wage withholding, threats, sexual assault and rape remain on the books and are uncontested by sex workers or any feminists in Canada. Sex worker rights organizations in Canada and elsewhere advocate and provide support for the choice either to enter,

remain, or leave the sex industry. Ethical support requires letting sex workers' themselves determine their own needs, and recognizing that each individual has different experiences and is the most capable of determining the course of her life. All sex workers deserve respect, and need to be supported in their choices rather than treated as victims who are incapable of understanding their own oppression. Sex workers not only deserve respect, but also deserve the basic right to security while within the industry, and to improve their working conditions. As Sharma notes, "if we want to end exploitation [...] we give more power to workers to end their exploitation." [21] Abolitionists, however well-intentioned, continue to advocate within the structure of rescue feminism, supporting carceral policies in line with right-wing government interests. These policies promote rights abuses against sex workers. As described earlier, carceral abolitionism has little quantitative effect on the number of people engaged in the sex trade. Further, it causes qualitative harm, in the form of stigmatization and violence towards sex workers (not to mention deportations) who do not wish to be "rescued." Concern for sex workers' well-being cannot and must not be acted upon blindly, but by taking the lead from those most affected by the laws: sex workers. They have been at the forefront of various struggles to remove the laws which enable violence against them, from Jamie Lee Hamilton, to the brave Downtown Eastside women of SWUAV, to the three sex workers in the Bedford case, some of whom have recently seen success in removing the laws that keep them in danger. A feminism of solidarity is what is now required in order to abolish the violence faced by sex workers, and to challenge an increasingly right-wing government hostile to the dignity of sex workers, along with all women, LGBTQ communities, migrants, Indigenous people, communities of colour, drug users, the mentally ill and the poor.

[20] *Hit & Run: The Impact of Anti-trafficking Policy and Practice on Sex Workers' Human Rights in Thailand*, Empower Foundation (2012).

[21] Nandita Sharma, *Home Economics: Nationalism and the Making of "Migrant Workers" in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006).



look back wasteland----- also appreciate

Instinctually understand

feel under it ----- real life depends

on assholes

easily triggered oscillate between hysteria and indifference

rational

see what is worth fighting for

see world different

look this is what I see

see hierarchy patriarchy everywhere

blunt

indifference

assumption other things in life

(are you....

(drink entitlement in water)

someone just did not get it

evidence expect to respond in a way (then they don't

burden to others

more effective

criticize = agree

something happened to me

dogmatic secret sisterhood/

don't start with slapping

its fucked

REVIEWS

L'invention du sauvage

Curated by Lilian Thuram

Musée du quai Branly (Paris) 29 / 11 / 2011 to 03 / 06 / 2012

Review by Kirsty Robertson

In 1989, Into the Heart of Africa, an exhibition that became a touchstone of controversy, opened at the Royal Ontario Museum. Though there were a number of criticisms, the most telling was that although it was the first exhibition at the ROM on Africa and Canada, it was told from the perspective of missionaries and a colonizing army - Africans had no voice. The heated

battle over the exhibition resulted (eventually) in significant changes in the Canadian museum world. And so, a hypothetical question: what might a similar exhibition on colonialism look like now, nearly twenty-five years after the original controversy?

Though staged in France rather than Canada, the exhibition L'invention du sauvage might begin to answer this question. It focused on the public display of humans, beginning in the fifteenth century with the presentation of North American and Pacific Indigenous peoples at European courts, and ending in the mid-twentieth century as the profitable business of putting humans on show petered out. The exhibition was produced for the Musée du quai Branly (Paris), a sprawling, leather-covered ethnographic museum dedicated to once-colonized peoples. [1] Within the context of the museum (which has courted controversy for, among other things, refusing to return the decapitated heads of Maori warriors despite legislation in France banning such ownership), the exhibition was a departure from the normal celebratory exoticization of the other. L'invention du sauvage illustrates inroads made in museum practice to avoid the kinds of unthinking prejudice present in exhibitions like Into the Heart of Africa, where the Afro-Canadian community was consulted only after the exhibition content had been finalized. In fact, L'invention du sauvage was the project of Lilian Thuram, a French public figure with a long history of advocating for the rights of refugees and migrants. Better known as one of France's most

decorated football players, Guadelupe-born Thuram publicly defended young rioters and supporters against the vitriol of then-President Nicolas Sarkozy following the 2005 banlieue riots. And yet, despite this, the same question that haunted Into the Heart of Africa remained: can an exhibition told through racist material and visual culture tell anything other than a history of domination?

L'invention du sauvage was arranged into four chronologically organized "acts," beginning with the presentation of Inuit, Tahitian and African peoples to an elite audience in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, moving through the mass appeal of "human zoos" in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, and culminating in the demise of such exhibitions in the mid-1950s and a contemporary video-based reflection on how such displays might underlie contemporary racism (in France and elsewhere). The almost 600 artifacts, photos and posters (many of the them advertisements for exhibitions and entertainments) became increasingly voyeuristic, exaggerated and sadistic as one moved through the acts. To mitigate the damage of the visual, all were deeply contextualized with extensive labeling.

Rather than the labeling, however, one of the most effective strategies employed in L'invention du sauvage was visual. The show could not have been complete without an analysis of Saartjie Baartman (1790-1815). Known as the Hottentot Venus (a term bastardizing her Khoi heritage), Baartman

was taken from her home in the Eastern Cape of South Africa and displayed throughout Europe, often in viciously sexualized circumstances. [2] The curators were faced with a problem: Baartman's story is affecting, and clearly indicative of the repellent exploitation of non-Europeans for pseudo-scientific research and pleasure. But would a further display of Baartman's unclothed portraits not simply repeat the voyeurism to which she was subjected during her life? The solution was elegant. Although an almost nude portrait of Baartman was rather disappointingly included, the focus of this section of the exhibition was a life-size silhouette of her shadow cast on the wall. The implication was that Baartman, though repeatedly displayed, was always inaccessible - what was seen was just a shadow of the real woman.

Baartman's shadow was the highlight of L'invention du sauvage. From there, the show worked hard to not allow the bright, seductive posters dominate the narrative of the exhibition, primarily through juxtaposing individualized portraits and stories with the posters, playbills and films showing overtly racialized and sexualized characterizations of "freaks," Africans, "Indians" and Australian Aborigines. But it was an uphill battle.

The inclusion of "freaks" and circus performers made for a fascinating historical lineage tracing the expulsion of any kind of difference from European culture. As a curatorial choice, it made the exhibition more expansive than it might otherwise have been, and revealed

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[1] A gift to the French people from former President Jacques Chirac, it opened in 2006. The history of the museum is itself fascinating; for more, see Sally Price, Paris Primitive: Jacques Chirac's Museum on the Quai de Branly (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

[2] See Natasha Gordon-Chipembere, ed., Representation and Black Womanhood: The Legacy of Sarah Baartman (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011).

[3] Barbara Nevergold, "The Phyllis [sic] Wheatley Club of Buffalo: 'Lifting as We Climb' - By Many Means Necessary," (paper presented at Gender Across Borders: Arts, Action, Activism, Buffalo, April 12-13, 2012).

[4] Eric Hinderaker, "The 'Four Indian Kings' and the Imaginative Construction of the First British Empire," The William and Mary Quarterly 53, no. 3 (July 1996): 487-526.

the way that critiques of the colonial past have themselves developed familiar (and possibly calcified) narratives. In that, *L'invention du sauvage* provided something of a shakeup. And yet, in the Parisian context—it is not so long since the riots in the banlieues—speaking to questions of difference in general rather than race in particular took the edge off any critical commentary the exhibition might have made on race relations in contemporary France (or Europe). Such limitations were exacerbated by the fact that the actual display of human zoos and (most) freak shows had ended by the 1950s, giving the show a neat and tidy endpoint. These aspects made *L'invention du sauvage* seem unnecessarily risk-averse.

Perhaps understanding this, the exhibition included an epilogue: four large screens showing French citizens (from many backgrounds) discussing contemporary racism. The out-of-context words from one of the discussants—"you are a racist, you are a racist"—echoed through the final section of the exhibition. It was effective, but it was still separated temporarily from the bulk of *L'invention du sauvage*. What I would have liked to have seen was an exhibition able to successfully include the more difficult-to-find histories that don't come with huge colourful posters, myriad photographs and artefacts. Take, for example an intervention into the Pan American exhibition held in Buffalo in 1901, where the women's club offset the racist human display "Darkest Africa" with a second display on the

achievements of African Americans (then Negroes) in the United States. [3] So, too, the position of the "Four Iroquois Kings," who traveled to England in the early-eighteenth century, and were (politically if not publically) understood as allies rather than "savages," was misrepresented in the exhibition and could have been an opportunity to show the many ways in which relations of inequality have to be continually made, as much through what has been archived as through what happened. [4] Histories of resistance do cut across the preserved, often shocking (and titillating) material that has been archived. There were moments that accomplished a reversal of the "invention of the savage" narrative, but because the exhibition did not try to imagine the vast and difficult project of uncovering all of those histories that are not recorded and repeated, it was inevitable that it would not fully unravel the message of those original documents. Ultimately, while there have been important changes since *Into the Heart of Africa*, *L'invention du sauvage* still failed to overcome the racist history of its material archive.

This Will Have Been: Art Love & Politics in the 1980s

Curated by
Helen Molesworth

Museum of
Contemporary Art
Chicago,
11 / 02 – 03 / 06 / 2012.

Review by
Jenna Danchuk

Beginning in 2008 as a collaboration between the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago and Harvard Art Museums, *This Will Have Been: Art, Love & Politics in the 1980s* acts as a thematic retrospective of work from 1979–1992. This landmark exhibition demonstrates the expansive qualities of the period, which only recently has begun to seem distant enough to be considered historical. The exhibit focuses both upon art works of the 1980s and the turbulent, complex and fragmented political and social landscape of this time. As curator Helen Molesworth notes, the 1980s have often been regarded with embarrassment, seemingly caught between overly theoretical and utterly simple-minded tendencies. [1] Read on their own, the exhibition's mournful and nostalgic title and its obtuse thematic sections ("The End Is Near," "Democracy," "Gender Trouble" and "Desire and Longing") do not do much

to offset these clichés. However, simply by virtue of its vastness and diversity, the varied selection of work that makes up the show will manage to challenge the expectations of most visitors. The exhibition emphasizes the political issues of the 1980s, encourages engagement and reflection, and ultimately suggests that perhaps we are not as done with the legacy of the 1980s as we think.

This Will Have Been includes works by nearly 100 artists in a variety of mediums. Highlights include Mike Kelley's Pollock-esque soft sculpture *More Love Hours Than Can Ever Be Repaid* (1987) and David Hammons' pomo pop art *How Ya' Like Me Now?* (1988). There is also significant representation of the emerging video art scene of the time, such as Gretchen Bender's *T.V. Text and Image* (1986-91), Charlie Ahearn's *Wild Style* (1983), and Paper Tiger Television's *Martha Rosler Reads Vogue: Wishing, Dreaming, Winning, Spending* (1982) and *Noam Chomsky Reads the New York Times: Central America in the Paper of Record* (1985). Taken together, such works paint a picture of a period that deeply explored the politics of race and gender, through emerging and relevant technologies such as video. While there may be a sense of nostalgia in the air, this retrospective presents contemporary artistic and political inspiration to audiences, rather than the typical, uptight and "hands off" atmosphere of most major museum shows.

The spaciousness of the gallery—one can literally look across to the starting point of their path

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[1] Helen Molesworth, *This Will Have Been: Art, Love & Politics in the 1980s* (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago/Yale University Press, 2012), 12.

[2] Ibid.

upon approaching their exit point, and across through the various rooms—speaks to the relative concerns of the artists in this exhibit, the thematic categories of the show, and the sense of past and future conveyed in the collection. For example, while Jeff Koons' *Rabbit* (1986) sits shining in one corner of the gallery, a dark room across from its pedestal screens Nan Goldin's *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency* (1979-2001) on a loop. As some stand gazing in awe of Koons' stainless steel symbol of commodity culture, a tense and empathetic group of viewers consider an opposing problematic gaze across the way while engaging with Goldin's images. By juxtaposing works with little in common other than their historical origins, the curators set up a conversation about the interrelation of these political concerns, proving the ongoing importance of dialogue concerning feminism, consumerism and power relations. Indeed, to see a group of visitors so emotionally engaged with Goldin's work, while more or less ignoring a piece by Koons that to many defines this era in the art world, shows the importance of feminist politics to the period—and evidently, today.

Furthermore, the choice by the curatorial committee to include the work of lesser-known and less recognized artists within the show was both surprising and respectful. The exhibit acknowledges those whose work is often forgotten and dismissed as artistically irrelevant. As Molesworth brings to attention in the exhibition catalogue, there was a

KISSING DOESN'T KILL: GREED AND INDIFFERENCE DO.



↑
Gran Fury, *Kissing doesn't kill: Greed and indifference do*, 1989. From the Creative Time Archive; Fales Library & Special Collections, New York University.

curatorial emphasis upon ensuring this retrospective was not a canonical survey of the period but rather an interjection and continuation of the dialogue of the times. [2] By including works by Toronto-based artist and zinester G.B. Jones, advertisements by ACT UP New York's "unofficial propaganda ministry" Gran Fury, as well as images of the underground London club scene performances of Leigh Bowery, the exhibit recognizes the diverse ways in which art, media, lifestyle and activism intertwine to create political expression and social change.

The exhibit has been advertised in popular media as discussing the influence of the AIDS epidemic, Reagan's reign and third wave feminism upon the art community, which indeed it does. However, upon interaction with the collection one discovers the importance of present day reflection upon these concerns; a retrospective not need imply a past so distant that it is irrelevant to contemporary culture. When considering the issue of abolition in relation to feminist

practices, the attempts to destroy systemic oppression, perhaps from inside the system outwards, can be seen in the work of many artists in the exhibit. For example, GB Jones' *Tom Girls* drawings (1985-1987) re-imagine desire, speaking on behalf of queer women, and more specifically, tattooed punk girls with a distaste for fascist authority figures. Similarly, Deborah Bright's *Dream Girls* (1989-90) reclaims the heavily heterosexual cinematic sphere. By guttlessly invading mediated worlds, much like the video art movement did, artists like Jones and Bright began to dismantle these oppressive structures. The inclusion of these works in a major institution such as the MCA, and more importantly, the fact that this exhibition focuses specifically on politically charged art works, is telling of the concerns of the 1980s. Instead of presenting these political aims as aspirations of the past, *This Will Have Been* suggests that the art of the 1980s should act as a starting point for critical thought about the future.

Herman's House

Film (81 mins), 2012
Directed by
Angad Singh Bhalla

Première at
Hot Docs festival,
27 / 04 / 2012

Review by Nahed Mansour
and Konstantin Kilibarda

Independent filmmaker Angad Singh Bhalla's *Herman's House* had its Canadian premiere at this year's Hot Docs Festival in Toronto. The film traces the relationship between artist Jackie Sumell and political prisoner Herman Wallace, who has been held in solitary confinement for the past four decades, longer than anyone else in the United States [1]. According to Bhalla, the film was designed to explore the frustrations of solitary confinement while tracing the friendship between the two main subjects. By not shying away from the potential contradictions in such relationships, viewers are confronted with both the potentials and limits of solidarity work across America's dividing lines of race, class and gender.

The film's title refers to an ongoing art project that Sumell initiated as a result of her multiyear, letter-based correspondence with Wallace. As Sumell explains, "The only way I could get him out of prison is to get him to dream." [2] Sumell asked

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Nahed Mansour is a Toronto-based visual artist and director of Mayworks Festival.

[1] Unless otherwise noted, all direct quotes taken from the film.

[2] Closed cell restriction (CCR) forces prisoners to be locked in a 6-by-9-foot cell for a minimum of 23 hours a day, every day.

Wallace to imagine his dream house, and he responded with a detailed description of an expansive, two-storey, 1970s-style home surrounded by green, flower-filled gardens, with a sumptuous bedroom, a swimming pool decorated with the Black Panther logo, a yellow kitchen with fire extinguishers hanging from the ceiling and a bath the size of Wallace's cell – six by nine feet. His vision is rendered through a computer-aided animation that breathes virtual life into the project. As Wallace notes, "You look at the house, you are looking at me." Sumell exhibits this collaborative piece alongside a wooden replica of Wallace's Louisiana State Penitentiary cell. The exhibition, called *The House That Herman Built*, has now toured to dozens of cities in over seven countries.

It is at the New York City opening of the exhibit, early in the film, that Bhalla begins to introduce some of the key frictions shaping Sumell and Wallace's relationship. In a telling voice-over, Wallace candidly asserts that art may not be his thing, and that he allows Sumell to pursue her artistic agenda while simultaneously "using Jackie to highlight [his] struggle." But as Wallace quickly notes, the relationship is not merely utilitarian, since the partial self-interest guiding their interactions does not "take away from the real relationship" they build together. This dynamic is reinforced in the next scene when Sumell and Vicky, Wallace's sister, are talking to Wallace from Sumell's New York apartment. At one point in the conversation, the question of who is really building the house is half-jokingly

raised, thereby breaching the question of ultimate ownership over the project. This lack of clarity persists as Sumell attempts to concretize Wallace's vision, which soon develops into a request that she develop, finance and build a community centre based on the model, in New Orleans (close to where Wallace is being held, and where his sister lives). The subsequent bind that Sumell unwittingly finds herself in – how to distinguish between the house she wants to build for Wallace and the house she ends up buying for herself and the sense of community she creates in New Orleans – then becomes a focal point of the film.

In addition to exploring the multifaceted relationship between the two main protagonists, Bhalla punctuates the narrative by including snapshots of other people touched by Wallace. For instance, we meet Michael Musser, who was imprisoned at age fifteen and spent several years in solitary confinement at the Angola prison. Michael shares his troubling experiences as a youth incarcerated in a facility for adults and how Wallace mentored him, improving his reading and writing, and most importantly teaching him about the value of true compassion. Near the end of this short but poignant sequence Michael's mother rhetorically asks: "If he could do that in there, what can he do out here?" The sentiment is echoed by others we meet, including Malik Rahim, a former inmate who introduced Wallace to the Black Panther Party in prison. Rahim insists to Bhalla that "Herman is the

essence of peace and justice. His spirit is a threat." We are also introduced briefly to Robert King, another one of the Angola 3, who was released in February 2001 and continues to campaign for Wallace's freedom.

During the question and answer period following the première, Bhalla and Iris Ng, director of photography, drew attention to the challenges of making (and pitching) a film about prisons that never involves entering one, a film about a dream house that is never physically built, and about a relationship between two people who never appear in the same frame. In fact, these frustrations serve as a successful entry point for the documentarians to examine the absences created as a result of incarceration. Bhalla was explicit about his intention to omit any images of Wallace throughout the 81-minute documentary. "I wanted people to feel the frustration of separation," he explained when asked about this choice. Wallace's presence in the film is vocalized through recorded phone conversations with the filmmaker. The conversations are occasionally interrupted by a

pre-recorded message from the penitentiary informing them that their call is being recorded and that their allotted 15 minutes is running out. Wallace's voice is accompanied by minimalist animated drawings that Bhalla inserts into the documentary in order to "help viewers imagine and visualize" his experiences and dreams.

While the film hints at the history of prisons, touches on their architecture and highlights the cruel and unusual punishment they represent, the overwhelming focus is on the beauty of individual relationships that persist despite the pain of solitary confinement. Bhalla avoids making a straightforward documentary about the prison-industrial complex, and instead presents alternative imaginaries that resist confinement. The documentary is refreshing in its ability to communicate to a wider audience, though some viewers may be left asking themselves whether such creative interventions are able to transcend the tendency to merely aestheticize the injustices they portray.



←
Herman's House
(film still), 2012.
Angad Singh Bhalla
(director).
Image courtesy
of Storyline
Entertainment.

Exorcising the Man Cave

Exhibition—
A.K. Burns and
A.L. Steiner's
*Community Action Center:
The Exhibition (ists)*

24 / 09 – 29 / 10 / 2011
The Feminist Art Gallery,
presented in collaboration
with Pleasure Dome and
Workman Arts

Exhibition Matrons—
FASTWÜRMS,
Erik Martinson,
Ann Cvetkovich,
Lauren Howes and
Suki Lee aka
Mr. and Mrs. Suki

Review by
Lauren Cullen

Following positive responses and successful reviews from exhibitions at Taxter and Spengemann, NY, Horton Gallery in Berlin and the Tate Modern, A.K. Burns and A.L. Steiner's 2010 *Community Action Centre (CAC)* made its debut in Canada at the Feminist Art Gallery (FAG) almost two years after being rejected by Toronto's Inside/Out festival and the Feminist Porn Awards. Cited as both too porny and not porny enough [1] and often dismissed as alternative, Burns and Steiner's project stakes a claim in the politics of pornography, effectively voicing their point of view through video, installation

and an accompanying zine. Premiering at St. Anne's Anglican Parish last September, the 69-minute sociosexual video, while self-consciously described as a pornorama in the zine, is far more complicated than a simplistic rendition of skin-on-skin action. [2] The video follows a non-linear structure that plays upon and pokes fun at selective porn tropes. Simultaneously depicting multiple constructs of the erotic, CAC replaces star actors with an extensive cast complete with porn names, and consistent cinematography is swapped for multiple narratives layered by reference to radical lesbian content. The video functions as a celebratory pastiche of queer and feminist productivity, established in the opening scene in which a banner reads FEMININE PRODUCTS to the sound of a boisterous crowd applauding. The video is rife with nods towards the queer productivity inspiring the two collaborating filmmakers, who drew heavily from the cinematic style of 70s gay male porn and eschewed dialogue in exchange for a soundtrack featuring an extensive list of queer and dyked-out rock stars, including Chicks on Speed, Lesbians on Ecstasy and MEN. It is an exercise of performative process documented by video. Burns and Steiner played the roles of co-producers, directors, camera operators and props department, offering minor directorial interventions to their community of friends and lovers who participated in the project. Having both major and minor roles in a number of the scenes, the two artists present a community expression built on erotic desire, consensual gazes and

playful energy that "seeks to expose and reformulate paradigms that are typical in porn typologies, intentionally exploiting tropes for their comical value, critical consideration and historical homage." [3] The FAG hosts and funds projects like CAC by inviting both artists and audiences to enter into the space through a dialectic approach, breaking down pre-existing codes of how art should be produced and consumed. Expanding on traditional uses of the gallery space, the FAG attempts to bridge the gap between production and presentation by turning the garage in their Parkdale backyard into a feminist gallery which also functions as a studio for their individual and collaborative art practices. It is an ideal setting for the work of Burns and Steiner, whose highly visceral project both celebrates and challenges working definitions of *community*, particularly by framing them through an erotic gaze. The show's *Key to the Classics* zine, modeled after the popular Cliff Notes format, functions as a study guide to parlay the myriad influences shaping the project. Complete with a lexicon of feminist iconography and collages detailing infinite renditions of the entire body as a sexual organ (in one close-up an armpit is seductively licked), CAC affirms multi-variant bodies and non-normative desiring by memorializing the sexual energy which charges this particular rendition of a community. It also offers new contributions to community discourse, defining the term as necessarily reciprocal and dynamic, subject to shifts in times and space.

Burns and Steiner's invocation of community rejects consensus as a working model for community by privileging the tensions that surround the discourse of sex. Framed within the space of the FAG, a gallery intended to spark dialogue, the multiplicity of perspectives consuming CAC might have coincided with a dialogue reflecting dissent and opposition. The project was vehemently positioned in contestation with feminist abolitionist projects and made no apologies for this. At the same time, Burns and Steiner offer a somewhat lighthearted space for contentious feminist standpoints on pornography, citing a screen shot of a Wikipedia page for the feminist sex wars in their zine, sandwiched between mirroring vaginas and opposite to a snippet of prose from Audre Lorde's *Uses of the Erotic*.

In watching CAC and participating in the corresponding *Exhibition (ist)* events, I was reminded of Judith Halberstam's provocative plea to consider alternative, i.e. queer, relationships to time and space: "Subcultures provide a vital critique to the seemingly organic nature of 'community,' and they make visible the forms of unbelonging and disconnection that are necessary to the creation of community." [4] For me the most poignant aspect of Burns and Steiner's project is the offering of a community that encourages dissent and remains un-fixed. While watching Kitty Neptune perform a feat of seductive athleticism on the Lazy Bitch (a reclining chair with a stripper pole embedded through the centre), I was struck by the sun-filled

Lauren Cullen holds an MA from the Women and Gender Studies Institute at the University of Toronto. Her work involves designing and constructing rugs that engage with her research on gender, sexuality and feminist art productivity. She has a background in theatre and has also trained as a furniture finisher in Halifax, NS. Lauren currently lives in Toronto.

[1] Described by Deirdre Logue and Allyson Mitchell in a conversation regarding the history of CAC.

[2] The words "pornorama," "pornography" and "porn" appear in numerous collages throughout the zine, including the back cover. A definition of the term porn is included on the first page.

[3] A.K. Burns and A.L. Steiner, *Cliff Notes on Community Action Center*, 2010.

[4] Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: NYU Press, 2005), 153.

Editor's Note— Thank you to Sarah Mangle for her kind assistance in preparing this text for publication.

gallery and amount of gazes focused on the erotic dancer, as well as each other, while Neptune reciprocated with her own gaze. By insisting that their project be consumed collectively, Burns and Steiner demand that a one-way tunnel vision be replaced with a never-ending flux of visual perspectives, and in doing so invite conflicting and disparate stances to their vision—even if they might not necessarily agree with them.

Cindy Sherman

Exhibition—
26/02–11/06/2012
The Museum of
Modern Art
The Joan and Preston
Robert Tisch
Exhibition Gallery

Review by
Brenda Goldstein

Since her emergence in the late 1970s, Cindy Sherman has been peerless in her ability to dissect the subjectivity of the camera's gaze when directed at women. If there were a glossary of feminist art, Sherman would be in it under A, for "apotheosis of decoding the visual language of mass media." The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) rightly notes that Sherman's work remains "the unchallenged cornerstone of postmodern photography," and if there is an institution equipped to do such an inimitable figure justice, the MoMA should be it. [1]

The curatorial challenge of a Sherman retrospective is doubtless

one of balance: managing to give a sense of the shifts in her interests over thirty years of production while also revealing the core ideas running through her practice as a whole. The MoMa show does this passably well, emphasizing Sherman's earliest and most recent works while giving short shrift to the mid-point of her career. Sherman's expansive oeuvre has been organized into themed rooms, producing an exhibition that is comfortable to navigate, if somewhat repetitive. Ultimately, the MoMA exhibition averts the audience's gaze from the abject in Sherman's work, eschewing controversy in favour of mass appeal.

The exhibition is organized into eleven galleries, several of which are devoted to a particular period of her practice, while others mix several series together to constitute a theme. Among the successful galleries is one featuring the complete *Untitled Film Stills* series, early work whose power lies in its ability to reveal the stereotypical female roles inspired by the world of celluloid: Hollywood, film noir, B-movies and European art-house films. Begun in 1977, the series grew over three years into seventy black-and-white photographs. At the MoMA, the pieces hang at eye-level in two staggered rows, allowing each one to be comfortably attended to. Seeing the series altogether for the first time, I was struck by how often Sherman is foregrounded against architectural elements—a church façade, a doorway, a staircase—serving as background players that dwarf and compete with Sherman's figure.

Sherman's other formative work, including cutout collages and stop-motion animation, is located in other galleries, to be discovered later on by museum visitors. This organizational decision encourages the misleading impression that Sherman arrived fully formed as an artist, and obscures chronological transformations in her themes and obsessions. Interspersed and diluted within the context of recent work, it is easy to overlook the power of her nascent ideas about the gaze and transformation.

The series *Society Portraits* (2008), along with another featuring clowns, is interspersed throughout the exhibition with work from other periods. The fictional characters in *Society Portraits* appear pathetic and vulgar, "entirely familiar in their struggle with the impossible standards of beauty that prevail in a youth- and status-obsessed culture." [2] Presented in ornate, claustrophobic frames and engulfed by walls painted a difficult-to-categorize emerald green/turquoise, the humanity and fragility of the portraits' characters are emphasized. In the context of Sherman's early work, *Society Portraits* amounts to shooting fish in a barrel; there is little satiric sting in portraits of society matrons in a city ravaged by the financial crisis (with another JP Morgan Chase scandal looming) and bank bailouts enriching the very people who buy this work. It is even possible to imagine board members chuckling at the clever caricatures of themselves at a fundraiser.

The exhibition skirts her less popular and less

Brenda Goldstein is a Canadian artist currently based in New York, where she is pursuing her MFA in Fine Art at Parsons, The New School for Design. Her recent sculptural work, *The Negative Space of Capitalism: Remnants 259 W 39th Street*, was exhibited at A Space Gallery Vitrines.

[1] Roberta Smith, "Photography's Angel Provocateur: 'Cindy Sherman' at the Museum of Modern Art," *The New York Times* 23 February 2012 (online).



↑
Cindy Sherman.
Untitled #465, 2008.
Chromogenic color print,
63 3/4 x 57 1/4 in (161.9 x 145.4 cm).
Courtesy the artist and
Metro Pictures, New York
© 2012 Cindy Sherman

critically ruminated work. For instance, only a few of her "fashion" works (1983–90) appear. During this period, Sherman parodied avant-garde fashion photography with a long runway of fashion victims; these are represented by only eleven tame images, none of them showing her incorporation of masks and prostheses. Placed alongside images from the 2000s and followed by her centerfold images, the hanging dilutes the real perversity of the series, where "the gap between imagined and actual body-images becomes psychotic." [3] There is a missed opportunity here to showcase her rage and pointed social commentary.

The list of works exhibited at Sherman's retrospective at Kunsthaus Bregenz (2006–2007) appears to be a much more comprehensive catalogue of her works, including series omitted at MoMA where Sherman's inimitable figure is not present in the frame: *Civil War* (1991), *Horror and Surrealist Pictures* (1994–1996), *Masks* (1995–1996) and *Broken Dolls* (1999). The curator of the Bregenz show, Régis Durand, described a straight-ahead chronological approach as most closely attuned to the evolution of Sherman's work, and best adapted to an appreciation of its extraordinary internal coherence and successive

developments. [4] By contrast, the MoMA show is at its weakest when the images of several creative periods are combined to constitute a theme. Rather than creating dialogue among works, this organizational approach makes the show feel repetitive, with clowns and society ladies popping up over and over again.

The power of Sherman's less commercially successful series is demonstrated in a visually arresting gallery featuring photographs from *Fairy Tales* (1985), *Disasters* (1986–89) and *Sex Pictures* (1992). Punctuated by close-ups of (simulated) damaged and/or dead body parts and sexual and/or excretory body parts, the photographs are evidence of Sherman's preoccupations throughout the AIDS epidemic and culture wars. These works should have been given more space, but a few works in one room may have been all the MoMA's curators thought the public could stand—and they may have been right. While I was looking at *Untitled #263* (two torsos, legs akimbo, cut at the thigh and stacked on top of each other, one with a vagina and exiting tampon string, the other with a penis and cock-ring, all held together by an oversized, jauntily patterned bow), a 12-year-old girl led by her father hurried through the gallery. "Eeeewwww, gross!" said the girl. "You are right," spat her father, "this show is absolutely disgusting!"

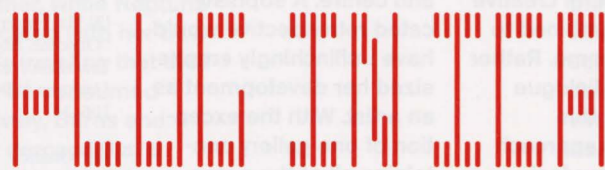
The MoMA, it appears, has erred on the side of safety, emphasizing the value of the artist as commodity in a blockbuster exhibition. The work that holds the

most value, to collectors and audience alike, is the work with Sherman front and centre. A sophisticated retrospective would have unflinchingly emphasized her development as an artist. With the exception of one gallery containing all of the potentially upsetting images, the works in show are the kind most attractive to collectors and least disturbing to squeamish visitors. Evidently, the MoMA wishes Sherman had remained "orange girl," lying prone and pretty on her kitchen floor (*Untitled #96*, 1981). Her mid-career work, gross and troubling, is only to be tolerated, nose pinched, until safe arrival at the later, dignified satire.

[2] "Cindy Sherman," Gallery 10, MoMA.org (accessed 14 June 2012).

[3] Hal Foster, "Obscene, Abject, Traumatic, *October* 78 (Autumn 1996): 106–24.

[4] "Online Press Office: Cindy Sherman" Kunsthaus Bregenz (online, accessed 14 June 2012).



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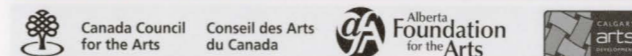
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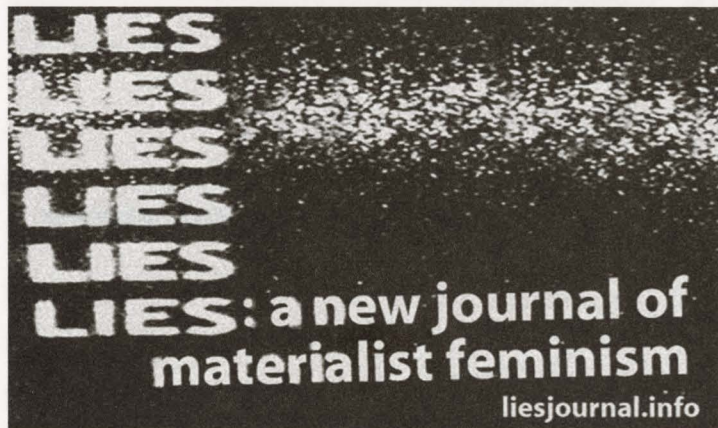


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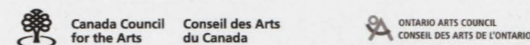
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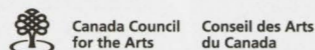
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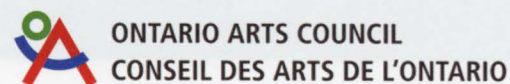
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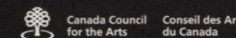
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Continuing their efforts to explore and unfold curiosities around locality, infrastructures, and creative practice to enable positive civic change, Windsor's Broken City Lab will be conducting a one week micro-residency in North Bay, Ontario at White Water Gallery. As part of this residency, Broken City Lab will work closely with the community of North Bay through a series of public engagement activities, including outdoor projections, interviews, surveys, and walking tours to identify how residents perceive and define their experience of the "local." Information gathered will be compiled and analysed by members of Broken City Lab and then presented to the public in an exhibition at White Water Gallery this fall. A small booklet will also be published that will aim to not only examine the practice and production of a northern locality, but also present a range of resistive tactics that can help the community survive, or help one survive the community.



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