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NICK TOBIER BRINGS FUSE TO MARKET IN DETROIT

Allison Collins GOES CAMPING AT THE CHILLIWACK BIENNIAL, Margaret Farmer and David Garneau CONNECT OVER CONTINENTS, Amy Fung and The National Portrait Gallery PICTURE CANADA AND Gita Hashemi REPORTS FROM THE FRONTLINES OF THE G20

\$7 Volume 33, Number 4



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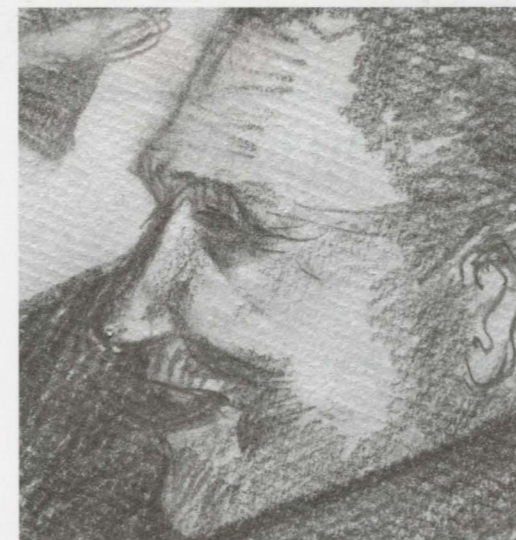
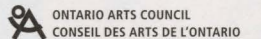
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**Jack Butler, Canadian Artist
Self Portrait**

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33.4 content



FEATURE

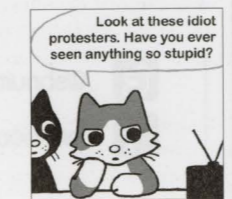
- 09 Editorial
- 10 Observations from The International Chilliwack Biennial
BY ALLISON COLLINS
- 14 Putting a Face to the Nation: Amy Fung in Conversation with the Organizers of the National Portrait Gallery
- 19 Field of Our Dreams
BY NICK TOBIER
- 24 Oh, Canada.
BY GITA HASHEMI
- 32 Little Distance Between Us
BY MARGARET FARMER AND DAVID GARNEAU
- 22 OurGoods
BY OURGOOD.ORG
- 30 Constantly Changing Ecosystem
BY RAQUEL ORMELLA

ARTIST PROJECTS

REVIEWS



- 38 Centre and Periphery:
Lancelot Coar's *On The Road / En Route*
REVIEW BY JONAH CORNE & ANDREW HARWOOD
- 39 Re-visiting the Warrior:
Gord Hill's *The 500 Years of Resistance Comic Book*
REVIEW BY LISA MYERS
- 41 Ours, and the Hands that Hold Us:
Playing by the Rules: Alternative Thinking / Alternative Spaces
REVIEW BY SUZANNE MORRISSETTE
- 42 Modern Metaphors:
Frank Shebageget's *Light Industry*
REVIEW BY DEBORAH KIRK
- 42 Arts, Activism and the Academy:
Resistance is Fertile
REVIEW BY ASHOK MATHUR
- 45 Foiled Islands: Abbas Akhavan's *Islands*
REVIEW BY SARA MAMENI
- 46 Disrupting Currents:
Ruth Beer's *Catch + Release*,
REVIEW BY RITA WONG



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IMAGINED COMMUNITIES

The fall issue of Fuse sees writers and artists considering how they imagine, participate in and construct their communities. Creating alternatives despite opposition or interference, or simply using unexpected methods, contributors explore how they shift their own circumstances and broader belief systems by going DIY.

In this issue's interview, Amy Fung talks with the organizers of the National Portrait Gallery, exhibited this summer at Latitude 53 in Edmonton. For the organizers of the Gallery, collectively putting on a show of portraiture — despite the city losing the national bid for the official gallery twice — allowed them to creatively think about what identity they wanted the gallery to have, as well as what identity they wanted to present of Canada to other Canadians. Kristy Triner, one of the members makes an important point in explaining the impetus behind their project — “If we don't make our own identity, one will be imposed on us.”

And it is this desire to create DIY forms of engagement, production and representation that is the thread that connects many of the articles in the fall issue. Allison Collins reflects on the DIY approach to the biennial model in *Observations from the International Chilliwack Biennial*. Openly critical of the movement for huge mass market events that are contemporary biennials, this participatory exhibition takes place on three campsites outside of the town of Chilliwack, BC where artists and curators consider the meaning of engagement and participation, while also sharing a meal of *JG Ballard Sausages*, cooked by Ivan and Heather Morrison.

In *Field of Our Dreams (F.O.O.D)* Michigan-based Nick Tobier considers the role of artists in community-based projects and his relationship to a food distribution business that he started with some friends over conversations at lunches served by the Capuchin Soup Kitchen in Detroit. An amazing small business, F.O.O.D delivers fresh produce to neighborhoods in Detroit that don't have grocery stores. Sold at a small mark-up to help the group buy a bigger truck, Tobier reflects on working in this small business — both as part of his art practice and as a community member.

Also in this issue, Gita Hashemi contributes the first part of a two part series on the G20 and its aftermath. In this first article, Hashemi recounts the systems of policing and surveillance that were installed and implemented during the G20 Summit in Toronto as well as the social movements that were formed across different ideological positionings. In the second part of the series, Hashemi will consider the long-term sustainability of different activist movements, reflecting on the functions and forms of creativity in establishing self determined social and economic institutions.

These along with an article by David Garneau and Margaret Farmer on the resonances in Australian and Canadian Aboriginal art, artist projects from Raquel Ormella and exchange economists OurGoods, and reviews of some incredible local, national and international exhibitions, all work to re-imagine what our present and future look like when we are actively creating it ourselves.

Izida Zorde

OBSERVATIONS FROM THE INTERNATIONAL CHILLIWACK BIENNIAL

By Allison Collins



Signage for the International Chilliwack Biennial. Photo: Or Gallery, 2010.

Friendly orange paper signs marked campsite posts, sketching out a makeshift frame of space within a space that was immediately reassuring. Pulling into the campground to pitch a tent, one came first upon these signs and then, around the first bend, a gathering of artists, curators, art historians and writers from Vancouver, who mingled over a dinner designed by artist Ron Tran, some wearing white get-ups resembling a bizarre combination of hazmat suit and mosquito net. In their quasi sci-fi garb, these curious campers were not quite explained by the serious-looking black sign that announced their location as “Camp Delta.”

This and other scenarios were part of The International Chilliwack Biennial, a two-day event that began with the idea to host a DIY Biennial on what might be the cheapest space available for rent near the Greater Regional District of Vancouver — a government-run campground. It was held at Cultus Lake Provincial Park, about an hour east of Vancouver, and a few kilometers south of Chilliwack BC. The event held little in common with the often incoherently large multi-million dollar, tourism-generating, multi-venue exhibitions one comes to expect from biennials. Instead, the intention of this event was to offer a series of small-scale, short-term outdoor installations and performances, marked out by temporary infrastructure, supported through collective efforts and an extremely limited budget. The rough space functioned as a studio, or exhibition-in-process, with an emphasis on makeshift, intimate, ephemeral, and on-the-fly production.

The organizers of the event openly questioned their own use of “biennial” as a loaded term, veering consciously toward the absurd. The ICB went against the grain of establishing an institutional structure by stressing the precarious nature of the undertaking. The event was purposely strange, referred to as a biennial in name only, and linked to Chilliwack as an idea, but not necessarily as its only site. [1] In these half-serious, half-humorous assertions, there is an underlying premise that this experimental exhibition seeks to create a circumstance that could foster unexpected dialogues or experiences and to create alternatives to standard modes of presenting and encountering art. Above all, the recently realized first-version of this event was characterized by its persistent use of humour and its small scale compared to other international biennials. The ICB wasn’t an attempt to compete with other exhibitions. Rather, it was a critique that poked fun at the market logic of the large international biennials under the premise that if a small group could accomplish



Heather and Ivan Morison. *The J.G. Ballard Sausage*, 2010. Courtesy: Or Gallery.

a biennial with such meagre resources, then there may be valuable ways of approaching art that don't require a budget of millions of dollars. Among a growing list of massive biennials, this homegrown small-town affair offered this up as its promise — not a replacement for the large-scale event, but an alternative site where one could experience the more contingent, last-minute, temporary aspects of art practice.

Of the roughly 75 or so people who attended each day, just less than half were artists showing work and the curators who put the event together. The rest was composed of people involved in the Vancouver art community, who learned of the event through word of mouth or the few direct emails sent out by the galleries involved. No social media and no advertising kept things deliberately small, and the demographic make up of guests blurred delineations between presenter and audience. Everyone who camped was wedged in together, stowing a tent or a car on someone's site, and somehow contributing to the whole affair by sharing what was brought along.

Technically, the biennial was a set of campsites reserved by a group of private campers who were personally responsible for them. The structure was so makeshift and short-term that the categories of public and private fell away. Everyone who attended was a participant. This inclusiveness didn't extend to other campers at Cultus Lake, who remained mostly indifferent to the art activity going on in their midst. The question of whether the event could or even should have generated a dialogue among new publics in this context remains an unresolved one. As a small event that was not geared toward generating mass attention, its purpose was less tied to dissemination than to a kind of incubation of culture. Future dialogue through publication and documentation holds the possibility that wider access to issues raised by the event could emerge, though the event organizers don't cite this as an explicit goal.

The ICB grew out of the activities of The Bodgers and Kludgers Cooperative Art Parlour, Or Gallery and Artspeak. Each of these spaces, through the efforts of the curators and artist-curators behind them, engage in

exhibition practices that take place outside of typically structured gallery environments, by inhabiting various alternative sites for short-term projects. The BKCAP operated an exhibition space for two years in the parlour of a home in Vancouver's Strathcona neighbourhood, shared by Aaron Carpenter and Jonathan Middleton (who also runs Or Gallery), as well as a third roommate Miguel de Conceicao. Melanie O'Brian of Artspeak has recently spent two years curating a series called Offsite, comprised of site specific interventions and projects undertaken outside of the Artspeak gallery space. Combining their approaches for this Biennial, Carpenter, Middleton and O'Brian each assembled programs for the ICB, and as a group invited further contributions from curatorial collectives with practices rooted in DIY spaces, like TARL (a multi-location team-driven object selection and processing collective from Seattle) or The Dirty Shed (literally an art space run out of the dirty shed behind Betsey Brock and Eric Fredericksen's house, also in Seattle). This collaboration as curatorial strategy resulted in a series of related programs incorporating a myriad of artworks that wound their way around trees, used a campsite as a gathering space, took found camping gear as source material and used forms of interaction familiar to the setting, like storytelling. The resulting works and performances addressed the natural surroundings and reflected a dialogue between notions of contingency and participation. A curiosity about other projects evoked exchange, using the possible chaos that could have resulted from an event with so many simultaneous curatorial voices productively. Rather than any competing gestures, or a desire to be best-in-show, the artists' projects built upon one another, contributing to an overall atmosphere of collaboration through impromptu drawing sessions, discussions, music lessons and wandering forays.

Each organization's campsite housed a set of events or installations, with artists also installing single works or conducting performances on nearby campsites. At "Camp Delta," Artspeak's program chose works

that consciously questioned the Biennial's promise of participation. These included the aforementioned suits by Markus Miessen, who also designed the campsite space using triangles of Astroturf with seating arranged for discussion, and contributed texts from his upcoming publication *The Nightmare of Participation* for campers to read. Miessen's texts interrogate accepted notions of participation, and propose that an individual may be more effective in group settings as a productive irritant who perhaps doesn't adhere to a consensual mandate. This position seemed to permeate the rest of the Artspeak program, positing a counterpoint to the somewhat idyllic inclusiveness of the ICB. It was most notably manifest in the public tension surrounding Oscar Tuazon's risqué storytelling, which might well have caused a quarrel with other campers, had they been listening in.

In contrast to the focus of the Artspeak program, The Bodgers and Kludgers site invited 11 artists to contribute what they wished in response to the place. Brought together under the "Safe Camp" symbol [2] the BKCAP free form approach resulted in a series of installations throughout the camp environment, with many localized at one site, like the dazzling watermelon and cucumber carvings of Deyra Ackay, which were cleverly spot-lit from above by a flashlight. The inclusiveness of BKCAP marked out a different kind of productive terrain from Artspeak, one more linked to a notion of collaborative chemistry and creative possibility.

Much of the ICB work was of a non-spectacular sort, prompting investigation into conceptual links and commonalities. The Or Gallery program, organized around a sci-fi literary reference [3] evoked ruminations on environmental dystopia and shifting perception. As part of the program, a dinner was hosted where absinthe made by Christoph Keller, and blood sausages, called *the J.G. Ballard Sausage*, by Heather and Ivan Morison were served. It's other components, Kara Uzelman's *Shortwave Receiver and Antenna*, and Gareth Moore's *The Sound of the Ocean Brought to The Lake* altered perceptions and



Installation view of *Nag Champa* by TARL, 2010. Courtesy: Or Gallery.

encouraged people to listen and pay attention to the surrounding environs. Each element considered the natural setting as a particular place of encounter, reconsidering the possible interpretation of camping as a utopian space, incorporating work into a conceptual frame that addressed nature on more critical terms.

The ephemeral nature of the Biennial and the overarching atmosphere of inclusivity and optimism was made all the more idyllic by the near-perfect weather and relative lack of tension in the environment, leaving more sharply critical analysis regarding, relationships between art and the natural environment, to be found in subsequent discussion or future iterations of the event. Instead, what was offered was a proactive doing, a response to the possibilities inherent in a particular local context, and a temporary site of engagement. As a prototype, the ICB offered a situation where artists could experiment and generate new work, far from the spectacle of the large-scale, forming the first word in an open-ended dialogue about what possible forms of engagement might be found or created next. □

ALLISON COLLINS is an emerging curator and writer based in Vancouver. Her most recent exhibition project regarded the *GINA Show*, a Vancouver-based cable-access television program from the late 1970s. She is currently completing her MA in Curatorial Studies at UBC.

Notes:

1. Organizers assure me that the International Chilliwack Biennial is highly likely to occur again, though it was emphasized that future iterations won't necessarily be held at two-year intervals, and the location could also change. The fact that the next iteration may occur nowhere near Chilliwack, will not deter them from continuing to use the name.
2. The safe camp symbol refers to the codes left by transient people, where marks are left on sign posts to indicate whether a place is safe to camp at or not.
3. The Or Gallery program was called: "When a day you know to be Wednesday, starts off sounding like Sunday, you know there is something seriously wrong somewhere." This line is a quote taken from the first line of John Wyndham's *The Day of the Triffids*, a dystopian science fiction novel in which the majority of humans are blinded by a dazzling green light.



Putting A Face To The Nation

Redefining the medium of portraiture, artists and organizers of The National Portrait Gallery redefine the identity of Canadians and artists.

Penny Jo Buckner. *Trudeau "Hail to the Chief,"* 2010. Courtesy: Latitude 53 Contemporary Visual Culture.

With an initial goal of hosting a multidisciplinary show of diverse, Canadian-focused portraits in Edmonton, the organizers of the very unofficial National Portrait Gallery spoke with art critic Amy Fung on Canada Day 2010 at Latitude 53 Gallery.

Organizers include Fish Griwkowsky, photographer and columnist for *The Edmonton Sun* and *See Magazine*; Dara Humniski, artist, arts administrator and co-designer of The Loyal Loot Collective; and Kristy Trinier, artist and Public Art Director for the Edmonton Arts Council. Midway through our interview, we are joined by Norm Omar, artist and labourer and Sean Borchert, artist and arts administrator, who round out the core organizers behind the project.

Amy Fung: *How exactly did this project of creating The National Portrait Gallery in Edmonton begin?*

Fish Griwkowsky: The concept started because Edmonton was denied what looked to be a really good shot at hosting the Portrait Gallery of Canada. In 2007, the Conservatives put out an open call to nine cities that could apply to host the then-stagnant Portrait Gallery of Canada. The gallery had failed to open in Ottawa and its contents remained in a warehouse in Gatineau, Québec. Edmonton was the only city that met all of the qualifying criteria, and we did so twice, so we thought we were a shoe-in for the gallery. Then, without any reasonable explanation — the Provincial government and the developers were going to pay for it — Harper shuts it down with murmurs of having no money. The reaction I had was in response to everyone bemoaning the situation. I said, "Fuck it, let's just make our own!"

Kristy Trinier: I had been researching the official Portrait Gallery since 2005 when I was working at the Banff Center. I was researching Senator Serge Joyal and his relationship to the Power Corporation of Canada, an organization that donated a large amount of its own collection to form The Portrait Gallery. The correlations and the politics involved were very interesting to me since the Power Corporation of Canada has ties with every single Prime Minister going back to the early 60s, either as a Director or through marriage. All except Stephen Harper.

Amy Fung: *So realistically, did any of you really think the gallery was going to be located in Edmonton?*

Fish Griwkowsky: That question bleeds into the point of this project, that whether or not The Portrait Gallery of Canada is here, a National Portrait Gallery can be here, and every city can have one. Part of the point of this show is to open this concept up and de-shackle it.

Kristy Trinier: I imagined it being here and how it would work to have access to that collection. I thought it would strengthen the momentum of the new Art Gallery of Alberta, and create a cultural base for the city ... but it was a political decision — bottom line. I also think it comes down to another issue, one we have been brainstorming about since the beginning, which is whether the gallery has to be a physical building in one location at all. If you imagine a more flexible project to host the collection, you can have a decentralized gallery. You can have the collection broken up and shifted around into different institutions across the country. There are exhibition platforms beyond a big heavy institutional building. At a minimum that would be great, but there are other creative things the government can do. If there is going to be a federal Portrait Gallery, we want it to be of an international standard like other portrait galleries in London or Australia that do innovative programming.

Amy Fung: So what do you think of the official Portrait Gallery of Canada presently online at Library and Archives Canada?

Fish Griwkowsky: Last I checked, the website isn't so much about the collection as it is about being Canadian. It's basically racially diverse people posing with frames over their heads.

Kristy Trinier: It's a very cliché representation of what a portrait gallery could be. The website reminds me of some sort of public service message to brush your teeth. It doesn't really offer a sense of the breadth and depth and meaning of those images. I think there are different ways to present this from a design perspective, to present the work with a little more presence. A really good website and an interactive presentation of the collection would be a great start.

Amy Fung: What are the portrait galleries doing in London and Australia and what do they look like?

Fish Griwkowsky: They're breathtaking! The one in London is hundreds of years old and there are all these old busts and oil paintings, but they also have David Bowie with the Diamond Dogs, and even Jamie Harding. But it's mostly these Romanesque busts that really make you stop and consider who made them and what their motivations were. It pulls you in as a viewer.

Kristy Trinier: The other galleries are a chronology of how people represent themselves. They show the advent of their first drawings, first daguerreotypes, first photographs, just first faces in different media, but they also show how artists worked in documenting historical figures, whether as royals or people of privilege, and just how after the industrial age, people started documenting themselves. It's interesting to walk through and see that. There is something primal about just seeing faces. I think that's the key: you need to see the people who have made your country. If you see the gallery in London, they commission artists to do portraits of people, but they also commission artists to explore the genre of portraiture, and both are equally important.

Amy Fung: Who is in your National Portrait Gallery and what are they doing?

Fish Griwkowsky: One of my favorite projects is by Jonathan Kaiser. He took 12 homogeneous players from the defunct Winnipeg Jets and super imposed them into a grid of 6. From a distance, you don't really notice any difference at all. It's such a simple idea, and it's so

Canadian. Another piece I love is the commission from Douglas Coupland of his brain at age 10. The work is a still life of a creature from the black lagoon, oogle eyes — it's a striking black and white portrait.

Dara Humniski: Trevor Anderson made a video of the High Level Bridge, which is an icon of Edmonton, called *Absent Friends*. He characterizes the bridge so it becomes more than just a beautiful structure, as so many people have had meaningful interactions on there.

Kristy Trinier: Sarah Fuller did a really interesting project where she made a series of self-portraits while undergoing sleep studies, kind of like studying the impact of your unconscious on your face. Since you don't get to see yourself when you are sleeping, it is a representation that is separate from your self-perception.

Amy Fung: How do you think your strategy behind *The National Portrait Gallery* differs from the *Portrait Gallery of Canada*?

Norm Omar: This show is an earnest attempt at engaging artists and art audiences, which you can maybe argue is the main difference. We want very much for this to reach people on a personal and community level, since that has been driving a lot of it. The DIY ethos at play is a really big part of what we're doing, but this show doesn't hinge on it.

Fish Griwkowsky: We are trying to create a collection of new works that could then snowball across the country, picking up local works as the show moves along. If it gets too stuffy, then whatever, we're just going to see how far we can take it.

Kristy Trinier: Part of being in Edmonton is having no expectations. Bidding on bringing the Portrait Gallery of Canada to Edmonton was done without expectation that it would really happen. The same goes for this show: we put it together without any expectations. It's better than doing nothing. It's a project-based experiment where we challenge ourselves to make a work and to collect new commissioned works and see how they relate to one another. It's set up with a formula where you create a set of conditions and then present the results.

Sean Borchert: When it comes to the contemporary art aspect of it, something I was interested in was introducing contemporary stories to the National Portrait Gallery of Canada. The official collection and storytell-



Installation view of works by Megan Morman. Courtesy: Latitude 53 Contemporary Visual Culture.

ing stopped at a certain point. They gather new materials, but there's a majority of old stories. It's interesting to carry on the conversation, as a lot of things have changed since her Majesty released her grip on the dominion. So it's a new identity that's being shown.

Dara Humniski: I also think with this show we've been engaging with a lot of artists whose careers are just beginning or are at an early stage, who normally wouldn't have a work in a collection at this stage of their career.

Amy Fung: We've touched on this, but what are some of your thoughts on what contemporary portraiture could be?

Fish Griwkowsky: The proliferation of photography, — to me — is the most important thing to have happened in the last decade. I used to feel like the only guy walking around town with a camera, and now there's nowhere in public where there isn't somebody with a camera out. We're constantly making portraits through things like Facebook, so I think portraiture, at least through photography, has been liberated and brought to the masses.

Kristy Trinier: I think portraiture is something that's been around forever and isn't going anywhere. People used to draw themselves on cave walls and while the traditional genre of portraiture has historically been exclusive, I think storytelling and music are ways of telling who people are and can be types of portraiture.

Dara Humniski: Fedora Romita did a graphic work for this show that is a portrait of the person who drew it through instructions by the artist, so the portrait is a record of time and motion. It's a portrait of someone following instructions.

Amy Fung: We keep breaking down the genre of portraiture, so why is it important to still keep the genre alive?

Kristy Trinier: Maybe on a certain level there's the theory of conflict, especially growing up in Alberta, you're not presented with a lot of ideas of what you should be. There's a really superficial version of what

identity should be in this province. If you look at the culture of Northern Alberta, you see that you need a house with a garage with a skidoo and cars and a job, but it doesn't really matter what you think or what you feel.

Fish Griwkowsky: I think one of the most important discussions in this country in recent memory has been about our own Prime Minister saying that ordinary Canadians don't like artists for attending these lavish galas, but that's him telling us what we think about artists.

Kristy Trinier: Because that reflects his experience of arts and culture, which is only by attending galas based on invitations. It's hilarious. If we don't make our own identity, one will be imposed on us.

Amy Fung: What now for this show?

Fish Griwkowsky: Todd Janes, Executive Director of Latitude 53, has been talking to other artist-run-centres across the country and there is interest from different cities that want to work on the idea, bookmobile it, and pick up more art along the way. We want 20% local every time it goes somewhere, or at least that's the plan. Douglas Coupland was here at the opening and said "You've got a really great group of people here." Now I'm not sure whether he meant the artists or the people organizing the show, but it's all the same thing.

Artists with work in The National Portrait Gallery include Sarah Adams-Bacon, Trevor Anderson, Daniel Barrow, Brandon Blommaert, Sean Borchert, Penny Jo Buckner, Myron Campbell, Douglas Coupland, Charlotte Falk, Sarah Fuller, Fish Griwkowsky, Josh Holinaty, Terrance Houle, Dara Humniski, Erin Ignacio, Luis Jacob, Nickelas Johnson, Jonathan Kaiser, Jenny Keith, Kirsten McCrea, Megan Morman, Stephen Notely, Norm Omar, Fedora Romita, Anya Tonkonogy, Kristy Trinier, Victoria Wiercinski and Alison Yip. □

AMY FUNG is an art critic and curator based in Edmonton. She is the author of *Prairie Artsters.com* and her writing can be found in publications such as *Border Crossings*, *C Magazine*, *Canadian Art*, *Galleries West*, etc.

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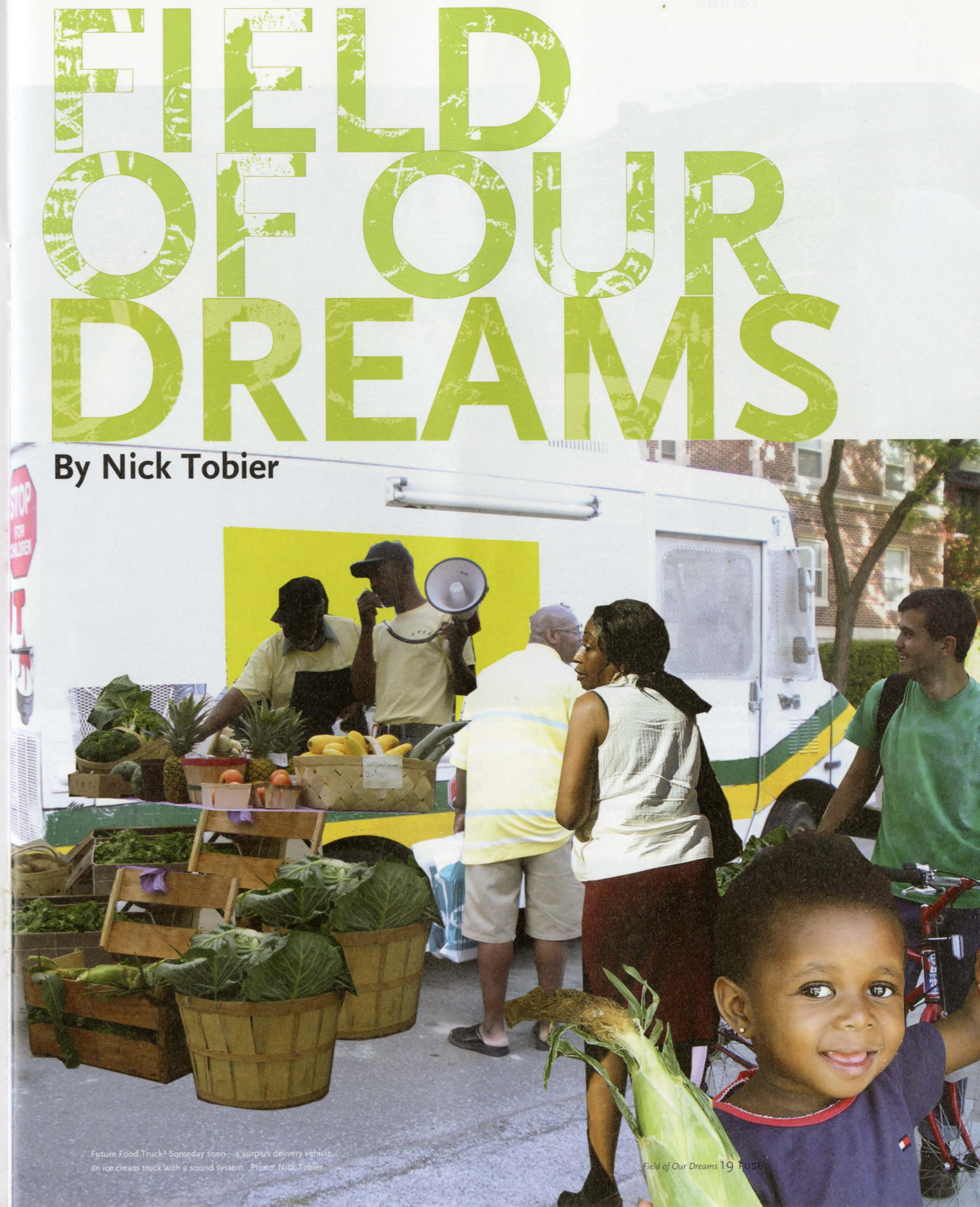
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FIELD OF DREAMS

By Nick Tobier

Future Food Truck? Someday soon—a surplus delivery vehicle, an ice cream truck with a sound system. Photo: Nick Tobier



Future Food Truck? Someday soon—a surplus delivery vehicle, an ice cream truck with a sound system. Photo: Nick Tobier.



A very young customer selects corn at Sheridan Towers. Photo: Nick Tobier.

For the past year, when friends ask what I am working on, I tell them that I have been selling fruits and vegetables on street corners and in housing projects in Detroit. The next question usually is: but what are you working on as an artist?

I have served hot chocolate from an embroidered and upholstered cart, and built a portable picnic table for New Yorkers to eat their lunch at. Field of Our Dreams (F.O.O.D.) — the Detroit produce business I have been working on — aligns with these earlier projects, both within the rubrics of relational aesthetics or social practice and in the spirit of providing a service as part of a cultural inquiry. But F.O.O.D. means many things to me and asks many questions of me, about the impact of art and social practices, about the blurring of art and everyday life, and about the role of an artist in society.

In the summer of 2008, I was working at Earthworks Urban Farm, and eating my meals at the adjacent Capuchin Soup Kitchen, which runs the farm. At a table in the lunchroom, I became friends with

Keith Love and Warren Thomas who were guests of the kitchen. Among the things we shared was an interest in doing something to enable access to the produce we were fortunate enough to be around. F.O.O.D. was born of these conversations, and the persistence of Keith and Warren along with Greg Bostic and EarthWorks staff, Gwen Meyer and Lisa Richter.

F.O.O.D. shows up 2 days a week for regularly scheduled stops on the lower East Side, one of the many neighborhoods in Detroit that are food deserts. For most residents, this is their only access to fresh food, not to mention the social aspect of being able to gather at a corner and talk with neighbors and strangers alike. Produce is purchased wholesale and sold with a small mark up so that the partners can earn enough to make it worthwhile and to continue the work. Initially we sold produce out of the back of my car and earned enough to buy a small used pick up truck, which has since been built out (with help from our friend John Baird) to incorporate display and storage. Our aspiration is to acquire a surplus ice cream truck or postal vehicle and retrof it for a mobile store.

Through its regular and recurrent presence, F.O.O.D. is a (sometimes) viable business, as well as tangible evidence that individual action and motivation have the ability to respond to pressing social needs with innovative, appropriate and interesting responses. These include critical and interrogative design processes and projects. For Warren, who is retired, the business gives his time and interests in eating well and activism for his neighborhood a focus. He even got to meet Michigan governor Jennifer Granholm. For Robert Mitchell, Greg Bostic and Keith Love, F.O.O.D. is not only a source of income, but a solid emblem of respect and admiration locally, not to mention that we enjoy each others' company and conversation — about food, life and art.

At the truck, I am a staff member working for the business, although I am most often introduced as an artist. This always gives me good pause to reflect on practices I value and aspire to, as well as those I have questions about. I have been the form giver — uniforms, precedent study and inspiration for envisioning small markets around the world, business cards, website, display, infrastructure design and

construction. But these are the artifacts of a process that is based in building relationships between all of us working, and with the people who come to buy from us.

In previous work of my own that I see as relational, my relations ended up being with other artists or privileged participants who understood the experience as part of a creative endeavor. F.O.O.D. asks me to be alert to questions of race and class along with responsibilities and concerns that are culturally more complex than the isolated art event. At the same time, I am alert to the questions that arise when art and everyday life merge in the social, and critical discourse takes a back seat to answering quotidian concerns, approaches social service or becomes overly earnest. In what I hope is part of a legacy that idealistic groups and practitioners around The Artists' Placement Group (APG) in Great Britain in the 1970's advocated for, artists can and should be part of projects and processes in which creative thinking and energy take precedence over surface manipulation or pure form giving.

Field of Our Dreams (F.O.O.D.) is a MOBILE MARKET bringing fresh produce at the best possible prices to Detroit neighborhoods. Once, I overheard my great friend, Keith Love, describing me as an artist to a customer who asked "What's the white dude doing here?" "His work," Keith continued, "is that he gives shit away. Isn't that beautiful?" What I have gotten from the opportunity to truly build complex relationships is far more than I could have anticipated through any other project — including insight, commitment to others and challenges to reflect on and respond to. □

NICK TOBIER grew up in NYC and saw an elephant walking down the street late one night. He is interested in creating scenarios that offer someone else's elephant. He studied and practiced Landscape Architecture and works in Detroit. <http://www.everydayplaces.com>

Opening the truck for business. Photo: Nick Tobier





When you're looking for a barter partner, you'll want to find someone who has a similar skill set to yours. This way, you can trade your services for theirs. For example, if you're a graphic designer, you might want to trade your services for a writer's or a photographer's. You can also trade your services for a friend's or family member's. Just make sure you're both getting something out of the trade.

OurGoods is a peer-to-peer online network that facilitates the barter of goods and services between artists. The site matches barter partners, provides accountability tools, and offers technical assistance resources to help artists complete their barter and their projects successfully. OurGoods emerges in response to the current economic crisis. To some extent, the arts have always existed in a recession economy. Independent artists in particular are experts at making do with very limited resources. As it becomes clear that even those limited resources will shrink in the coming years, OurGoods enables us to leverage what we already do well in order to create a support system for ourselves. economicrevitalization.blogspot.com.

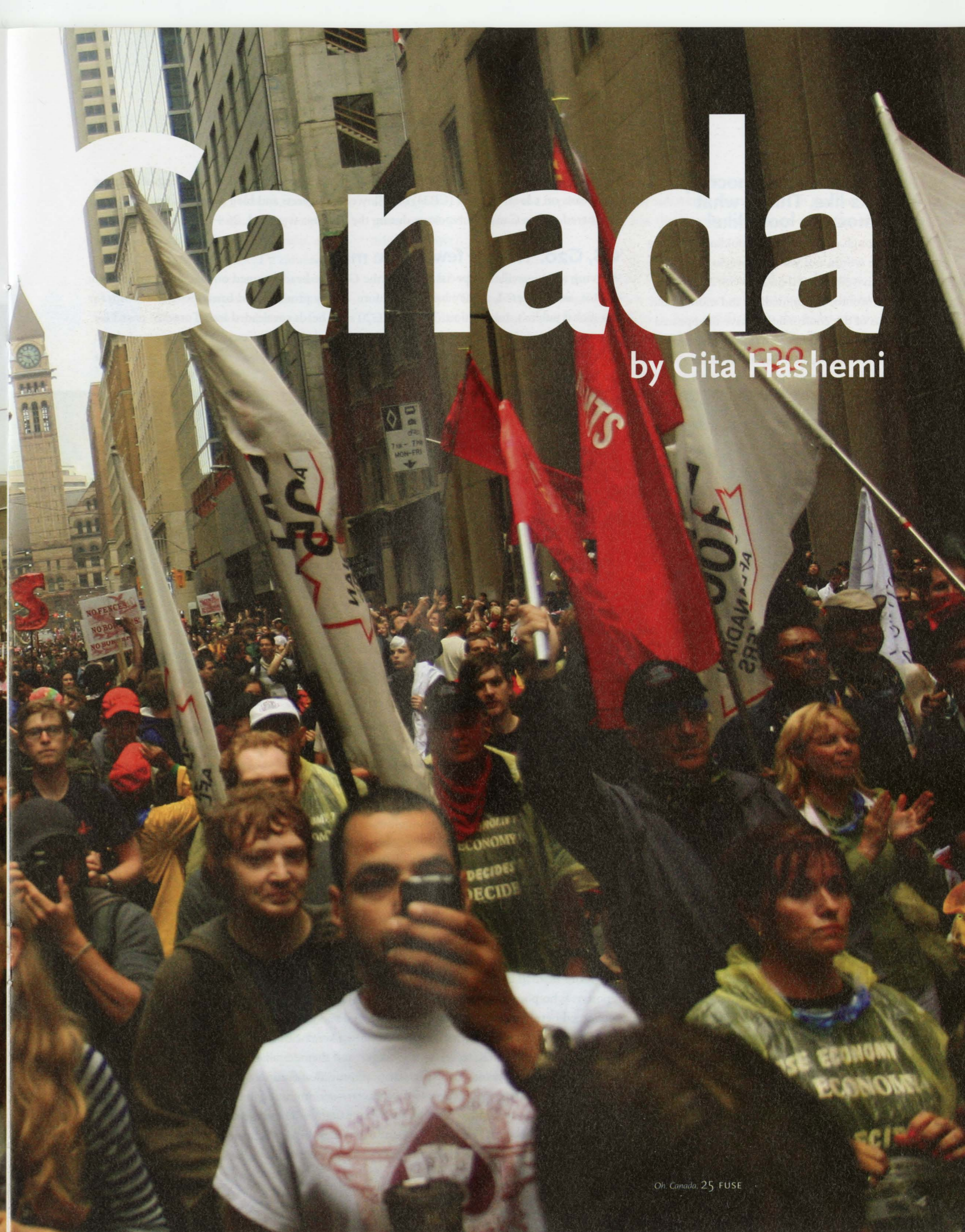
FEATURE
G20 TORONTO
CANAL 2010

Oh.

Forget about art.
Can we
talk about
the streets?

Canada

by Gita Hashemi



Rally at Bay and King during the G20 Protests, Saturday June 26, 2010.
Photo: Ben Powless.

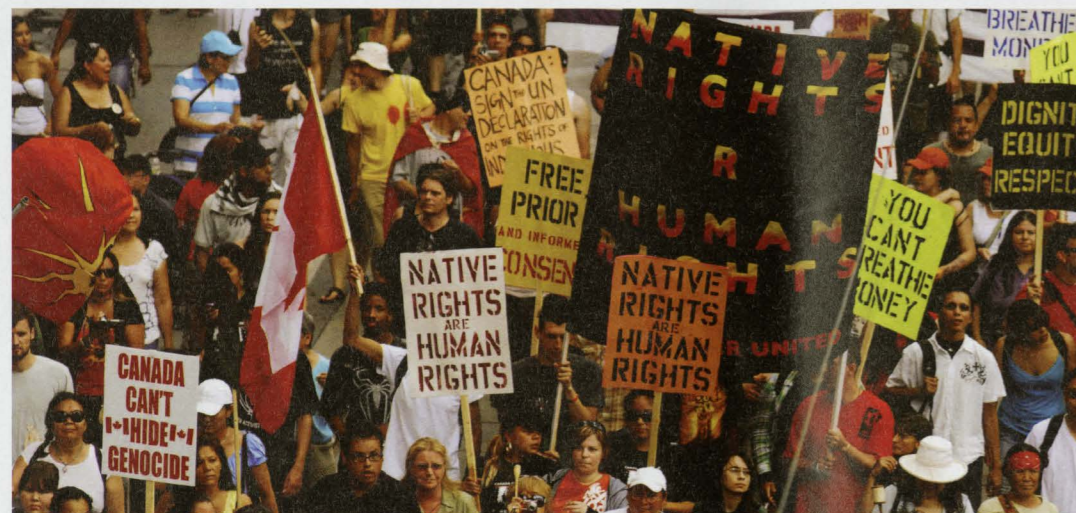
Tell me what democracy looks like. This is what democracy looks like!

Although events are still unfolding as I write these words, not yet three weeks after the massive crackdown on anti-G8/20 protests in Toronto, the immediate and most visible signs of the confrontation have disappeared from view. Erected to barricade the heads of G20 states against grassroots displays of

of awareness for those who were on the streets. As well many witnessed the goings-on in live broadcasts on a local channel (CP24) or followed the tweets and blog posts of a few mild-mannered, polite Canadian reporters during the Summit weekend, 26 – 27 June, 2010.

G8, G20. They're few, we're many.

Arriving in Huntsville by special delivery, the G8 state heads stepped on fake grass, grinned for photos, and delivered, as they had done before, empty promises and banal feel-good words for the global public's stupefaction. Then the G20 state heads cavalcaded into Toronto, posed for a larger group photo and agreed to respond to the global economic crisis by continuing the policy of "fiscal sustainability" by "delivering existing stimulus plans, while working to create



About 2,000 people marched along the main avenues in downtown Toronto to demand more respect for rights of indigenous Canadians during the G20. Photo: Eduardo Lima.

discontent, the 3.5-kilometer chain-link "security fence" with concrete base that cut through downtown, was taken down overnight as soon as the VIPs left town. The next day, the financial district returned to business as usual, and within a day the anti-riot police squad was taken off the streets and the borrowed storm troopers were returned to their lender cities. In contrast to the literally in-your-face policing during the summit, the police presence on the downtown streets has become almost invisible this past week — except in poor areas such as pre-gentrified Regent Park or St. James Town, where heavy policing has been a daily fact of life, before, during and after the Summit. Yet, even for the condo-dwellers and hipsters who now make up the majority of the city's downtown residents, police presence remains keenly perceptible if not immediately visible. Memories of checkpoints, arbitrary searches, kettling and mass detentions in trendy neighbourhoods still hover on the surface

the conditions for robust private demand" and taking "actions to boost national savings while maintaining open markets." [1] In plain words, they agreed to continue bailing out big business and letting the rich make astronomical profits while imposing further austerity measures on the working class and the poor. Canada's Conservative Government played its role as a globally gracious and "fiscally responsible" host with an unprecedented security expenditure of over one billion dollars. But, although even the tame Liberals and the right wing media questioned the merits and mechanics of such expenditures, in all too familiar Canadian fashion nobody was too rude or persistent when the agencies that were handed the cash failed to provide adequate answers, and in the case of the RCMP, which got the biggest cash prize, any answers at all. [2] It was business as usual in the globalized world and in our domesticated public sphere.

Whose streets? Our streets! Whose city? Our city!

The more than 10,000 government and NGO delegates and mainstream and alternative reporters who poured into the city have long since left. And so have many of the people who converged here from across municipal, provincial and national borders to stage the resistance to the G8/20, starting with the People's Summit a week earlier. The convergence built up through a range of panels, screenings, meetings and themed rallies came to a pinnacle with the headiest of the street protests, the mass demonstrations of Saturday June 26th. That demonstration brought some 30,000 people from diverse communities and vastly different ideological and topical interests to a march led by the labour unions. There are now far fewer briefcases, cameras, voice recorders, big bright official name-tags, bandanas, banners, flags, picket signs, megaphones, pink tutus and black backpacks on the streets. These days, the non-residents

who walk the streets of downtown are once again innocuous summer tourists, carrying cameras and souvenir bags, posing for photos in front of monuments and landmarks, apparently oblivious to the CCTV cameras that were installed at many major intersections as part of the security measures for the Summit, and seem to have become permanent fixtures. In the upheaval caused by the empire striking back, nobody in the official "public



Rally at Bay and King, Saturday June 26, 2010. Photo: Ben Powless.

sphere" is asking when these cameras will be uninstalled. That doesn't seem to be at the top of the civil liberty advocates' demands either, although there are many who have vowed to protest until their demand for a public inquiry into G20 security operations is meaningfully met.

One, two, three, four: We won't take this shit no more!

For some, their dream of democracy has been deeply disturbed. They were whipped at the corner of Queen and Spadina, where a few people burned a police car on Saturday afternoon. On Sunday evening, in plain view of live television cameras, some 150 people, most of them accidental passers-by or residents of the neighbourhood, met with Israeli military style collective punishment (no accidental resemblance here). Encircled and outnumbered by riot cops in full gear, they were held without explanation for hours under torrential rain.

They were "released" only after several among them who were profiled or self-identified as activists were snatched by the cops or voluntarily submitted to arrest. [3] On that Sunday, many people who were not protesters before saw their own powerlessness in the face of arbitrary power.

Many of those who participated in the anti-G8/20 protests also suffered a shock as they witnessed their Charter Rights trampled over, as was a woman, who was trampled when mounted police stormed into the Designated Speech Area indifferent to the audio-visual equipment that presumably televised "free speech" and "legitimate protest" activities to G20 delegates several blocks south. The police seemed oblivious to citizen cameras too, in fact to the very notion of "citizenry," as if they knew that their uniforms and shields protected them not only against bubbles and squirt guns but also against any public accountability that might be motivated by the ubiquitous citizen-cum-documentarian accounts.

What was displayed in plain view was the frightening power of militarized police, the frailty of notions of free speech and civil liberties, the fragility of so-called safe spaces, and the falsehood of the assumption that "that" is what happens in Iran or in Occupied Palestine, in "those" places. As an Iranian observer commented, if the stakes were high enough, the same forces would be shooting live ammunition at protesters instead of rubber bullets. They did so in Oka and Ipperwash. A young black man, Junior Alexander Manon, was killed in Toronto police custody just a few weeks before the G20. For those from racialized communities that bear on their bodies and collective psyche the marks of daily state violence, and for those with some historical perspective and political acuteness, there were no surprises. Everything is already overdetermined in a violent racist settler state. Yes, I mean in Canada.

"Free speech" under attack! What do we do? (Unite and fight back!)

Humbled too was the mainstream media's self-serving claim to safeguard democracy. They arrived in the hundreds with their recording and relaying gear. They were embedded in cool hotels and reported from a specially equipped media centre. Well protected from the city's unusual summer heat and lulled by a fake lake and images of tranquil Canadian natural scenery, they also partook of Toronto's sizzling world-class urbanscape while watching soccer games and drinking ale on the public's tab. Their counterparts on the streets saw an altogether different scene: line after line of cops advanced into the "protest zone" beating their shields with their batons, as if in a perverse machine-vs-human competition with the high-energy, joyous and organically forming and flowing samba squads that marched in protest. The police didn't hesitate to wield their batons against unarmed protesters that were naively hanging to their understanding of their rights by sitting on the ground and singing or waving peace signs. Here, as in closer to the fence at the site of a legal strike at Novotel Hotel, the police were emphatically hostile to independent journalists, beating and/or detaining some and breaking or confiscating their recording equipment, a fate they meted out indiscriminately even to the officially accredited, name-tag-displaying mainstream media folk. [4]

But while indie journalists from around the world and a few outraged corporate journalists (most of them locals) dispatched reports of what they were witnessing, the mainstream corporate media — including the publicly funded CBC — followed the tried-and-true formula of running short clips or photographs showing burning police cars and black blockers smashing windows as backdrop to analysis that divided the people on the street into "peaceful" and "violent" protesters. Some didn't even make that distinction and simply reported on "violent protests" and "riots."

Protesting is not a crime! No more cops on overtime!

The RCMP-led Integrated Security Unit — comprised of partners from the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP), Canadian Forces (CF), Toronto Police Service (TPS) and Peel Regional Police (PRP) in collaboration with private security companies — provided the special effects for the summit show from a command centre over 100 kilometers away from Toronto in Barrie. The ISU erected fences, removed garbage bins and tree boxes from the designated “security zone,” installed more cameras, brought in water and sonic cannons, got Ontario’s Liberals to pass a special law and lied about how far this law extended police powers. They deployed an occupation force of over 19,000 overtime-earning non-identified cops, shielded up and armed with a wide range of assault weapons and restraining tools. They roamed the city on foot, bike, horseback, in police cars, unmarked vans and trucks, rental vans and trucks, on city transit and Greyhound buses, accompanied by paddywagons and surveillance video units on the ground and helicopters in the air. This was in addition to countless undercover cops and informants who infiltrated, some beginning months before the Summit, every mobilizing and protesting nook and cranny.

Two, four, six, eight: We don't want no police state!

Although its scale was as overblown as its budget, the remote-controlled violence perpetrated by security operators was scripted in its general outline if not in its exact details. The levels and methods of coordination of forces, technologization, surveillance and brutality were to be expected, and their resemblance to Israeli military-style policing was no accident. This included the preemptive early-morning raids on activist houses, the careful identification, targeting and arrests of some community organizers prior to Saturday’s “riot,” the detention-by-profile or random arrest of over 1,000 people, and the subsequent identification and intimidation techniques used against them, as well as the deceptively erratic and well-documented collective punishment and street beatings.

The massively militarized policing and urban occupation that we saw in Toronto seemed to be the first full dress rehearsal in what successive Canadian governments have been building towards. Formalized through the agreement signed in 2008 by Harper’s former Minister of Public Safety, Stockwell Day, the Canadian “security” forces (which include the military, the police, the intelligence apparatus and private security armies) have been sharing “knowledge, experience, expertise, information, research, and best practices” while working in “technical exchange cooperation, including education, training, and exercises” with Israel, a country that now surpasses even the United States in exporting tools and techniques of occupation and policing. [5] Nothing went “wrong” in the Summit’s security. Everything went as planned.

Whose side are you on? Whose side are you on?

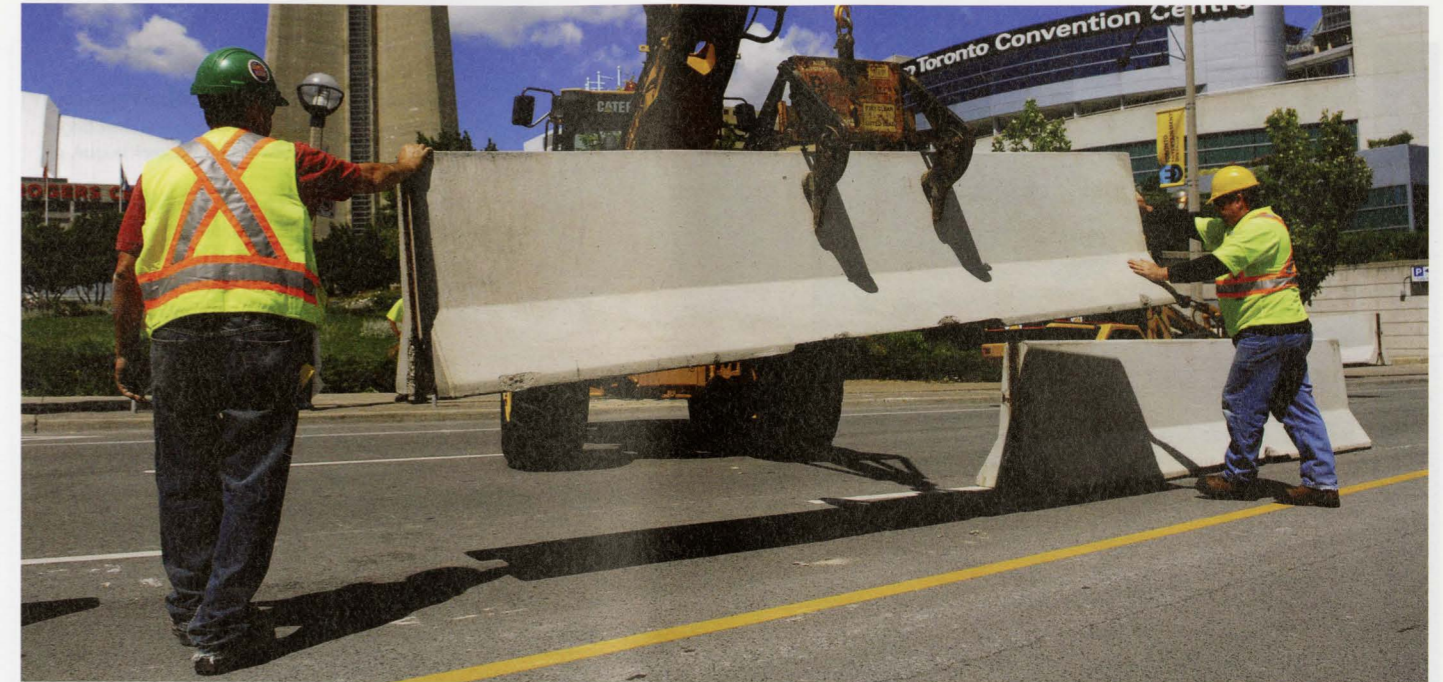
Also predictable and played out again and again were the divisions and disagreements among the so-called “protesters,” whom the media now refer to as a monolithic entity. While some labour leaders rushed to issue statements to disassociate themselves from the “thugs” only two hours after the black bloc actions started, others decided to stay on the streets and stand on principles of solidarity across these divisions. Many advocates of non-violence fumed at those who pushed south toward the fence (the “black bloc” mostly went north on Yonge away from the fence) and thus challenged the limits and choreography imposed on the protest. “Militants” and “radicals” in turn felt angry at the institutional left who voluntarily accepted these limits and deserted the streets when the police attacked peaceful protesters even at the “Designated Protest Zone.” Almost immediately, social media and the blogosphere filled with arguments for or against one or another.

The discussion about the effectiveness of black bloc — or even pink bloc — tactics is as old as their emergence as distinct presences in protest movements. For that matter, so is the discussion about the effectiveness of ritualized mass rallies and “convergences” as sites of people power and resistance to globalization. While the political divisions run much deeper than disagreements about tactics and strategies, it is far too simplistic and self-defeating to reduce the landscape of resistance to rigidly opposing camps of “non-violence” and “militant/confrontational,” or to “those building alternatives” and “those challenging the power of the state,” or to “those seeking state legitimacy” and “those questioning the legitimacy of the state.” In reality, many activists fluidly move between these camps and/or intentionally occupy a variety of in-between spaces.

The history of social movements shows that the empowering-transforming and radicalizing-mobilizing of broad communities has to go hand-in-hand if the politico-economic system is to change substantially. It is precisely in the work of negotiating and building political, tactical and strategic alliances around specific actions, interventions and campaigns that we can envision and actualize alternatives to the existing corrupt and untenable system. In Toronto, the mobilizing groups and activist convergence showed a great deal of creativity in networking, coalition building and allowing for a diversity of tactics, and, subsequently, in staging a wide range of events and forms of protest. The movement — can we call it that yet? — that seems to be taking shape in defense of civil liberties in Canada may also show potential for making far-reaching alliances.

We're fighting for our freedom. We shall not be moved.

If global capital’s intention to defend itself by any means necessary even on the streets of the global north hadn’t become clear to everyone in Genoa and Québec City, it is now screamingly obvious post-Toronto. They mean business. Literally. It should also have become quite apparent that the security apparatus learns from every confrontation and modifies and improves its responsiveness accordingly, based on a vast and insidious system of intelligence gathering.



Workers erecting the security fence in Toronto in preparation for the G20. Photo: Eduardo Lima, 2010.

In the face of calculated police violence, many communities and activists of different ideological locations have again come to a temporary alliance and sprung into action to support the legal defense of the 17 activists who were detained the longest and have received the harshest charges. Many of these were identified and arrested before the riot and some are still in detention as I write. There are also efforts to inform and support the 200-plus people who were released shortly after detention but also face criminal charges. These efforts should form a fertile soil in which resistance can grow and spread.

Just like a tree standing by the water, we shall not be moved.

The questions and imperatives facing us now have to do with the long-term sustainability of our activism and the effectiveness of our collective actions. We should ask, at this or any juncture, if experiencing the trauma of police brutality and getting entangled in costly and lengthy legal battles may in fact be unavoidable and have catalytic and strategic value for our work. Obviously we cannot avoid the wrath of the state if we shake the foundations of the system, but it is absolutely necessary not to repeat ourselves (for that makes us predictable and “police-able” and depletes our resources) and not always move

from a reactive position. If we agree that we need a paradigm change, it is important that we don’t glorify any tactics or ideological positions at the cost of failing to imagine alternative ways of working together and moving forward with our struggles.

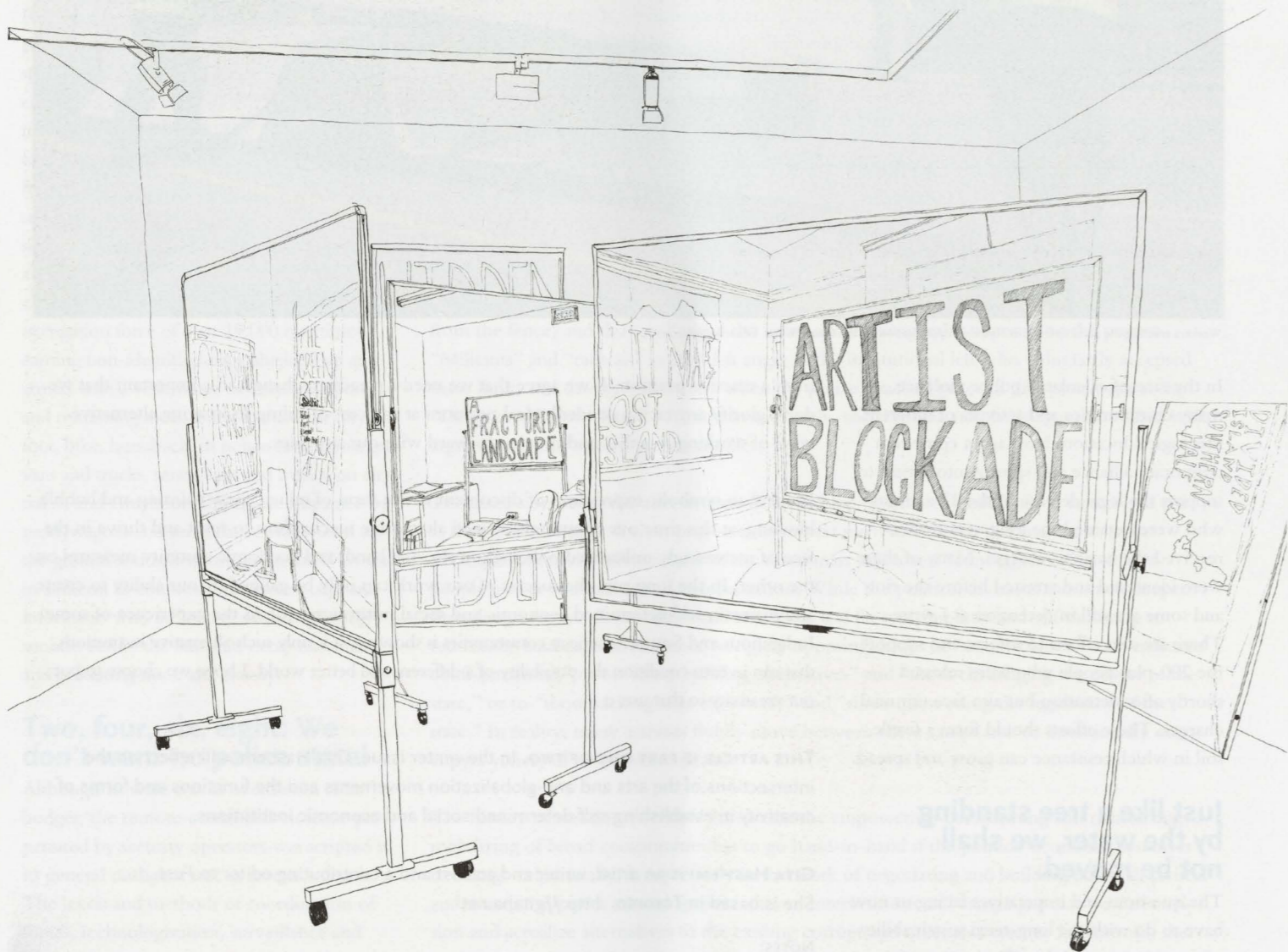
More than symbolic expressions of discontent in the form of rallies, spray painting and bubble blowing, at this time our communities need alternative mechanisms to resist and thrive in the face of increasingly militarized policing, on the one hand, and economic austerity measures on the other. In the long run, the success of our work can only be gauged by our ability to create and maintain self-determined economic and social institutions. [6] As the experience of some Indigenous and South American communities is showing, it is only such alternative institutions that can in turn condition the possibility of a different and better world. I hope we choose to put our creativity to that use. □

THIS ARTICLE IS PART ONE OF TWO. In the winter issue, Gita Hashemi will reflect on the intersections of the arts and anti-globalization movements and the functions and forms of creativity in establishing self-determined social and economic institutions.

GITA HASHEMI is an artist, writer and activist and a contributing editor to *Fuse*. She is based in Toronto. <http://gitaha.net>

NOTES:

- [1. http://g20.gc.ca/toronto-summit/summit-documents/the-g-20-toronto-summit-declaration/](http://g20.gc.ca/toronto-summit/summit-documents/the-g-20-toronto-summit-declaration/)
- [2. http://news.nationalpost.com/2010/06/03/g20-budget-documents-obtained-by-the-national-post/](http://news.nationalpost.com/2010/06/03/g20-budget-documents-obtained-by-the-national-post/) and <http://www.nationalpost.com/money+being+spent/3104265/story.html> and <http://www.nationalpost.com/Liberals+question+soaring+security+costs/3104283/story.html>
- [3. http://www.cbc.ca/canada/g20streetlevel/2010/06/g20-trapped-at-work-at-queen-and-spadina.html](http://www.cbc.ca/canada/g20streetlevel/2010/06/g20-trapped-at-work-at-queen-and-spadina.html) and <http://openfile.ca/toronto-file/g20-sunday-evening-standoff>
- [4. http://www.cbc.ca/canada/story/2010/06/28/g20-rosenfeld-police.html](http://www.cbc.ca/canada/story/2010/06/28/g20-rosenfeld-police.html) and <http://www.ctv.ca/CTVNews/TopStoriesV2/20100627/g20-arrested-accounts-100627/>
- [5. http://electronicintifada.net/v2/article10823.shtml](http://electronicintifada.net/v2/article10823.shtml)
- See Z. Amadahy’s excellent reflections on notions of community and protest at <http://rabble.ca/news/2010/07/community-%E2%80%98relationship-framework%E2%80%99-and-implications-activism> and <http://rabble.ca/news/2010/07/protest-culture-how%E2%80%99s-it-working-us>



RAQUEL ORMELLA's work investigates how contemporary art encourages reflexivity, political consciousness and social action. She has built a practice covering a diverse range of activities such as video, painting, installation, drawing and zines.

Losing It: Jarvis, Pagurek, Wensley

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Using It: ArtStars*, Lendrum, Valentina

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Exhibition participants create myriad video versions of themselves capable of interactions with an ever-expanding on-line audience.

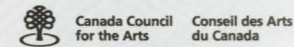
**Kim Morgan:
Range Light, Borden-Carleton, PEI, 2010**

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Kim Morgan has cast an abandoned lighthouse in latex. The internal and external casts are sewn together and lit from within, resulting in a sculpture that is both architectural and anatomical.

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Image: Nadine Bariteau, from the Supermarket series, photo documentation of a public intervention (detail), 2010. photo by Patrick Dionne

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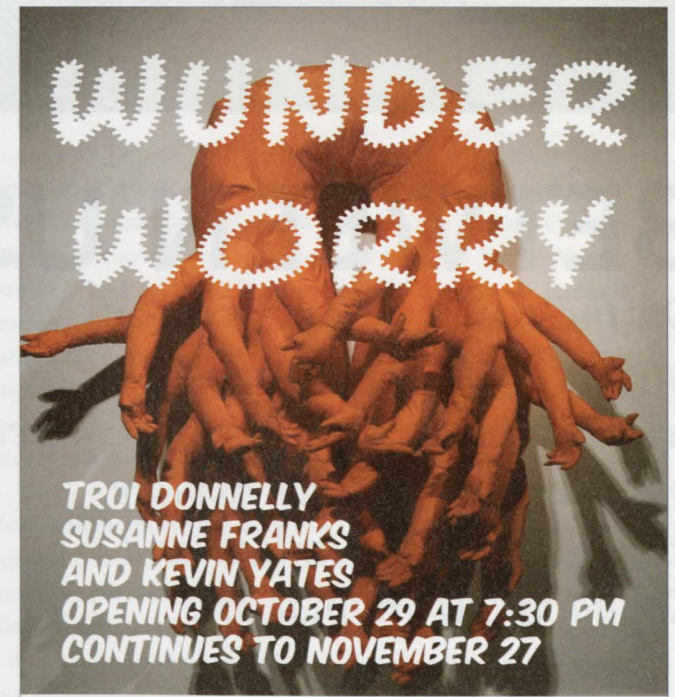
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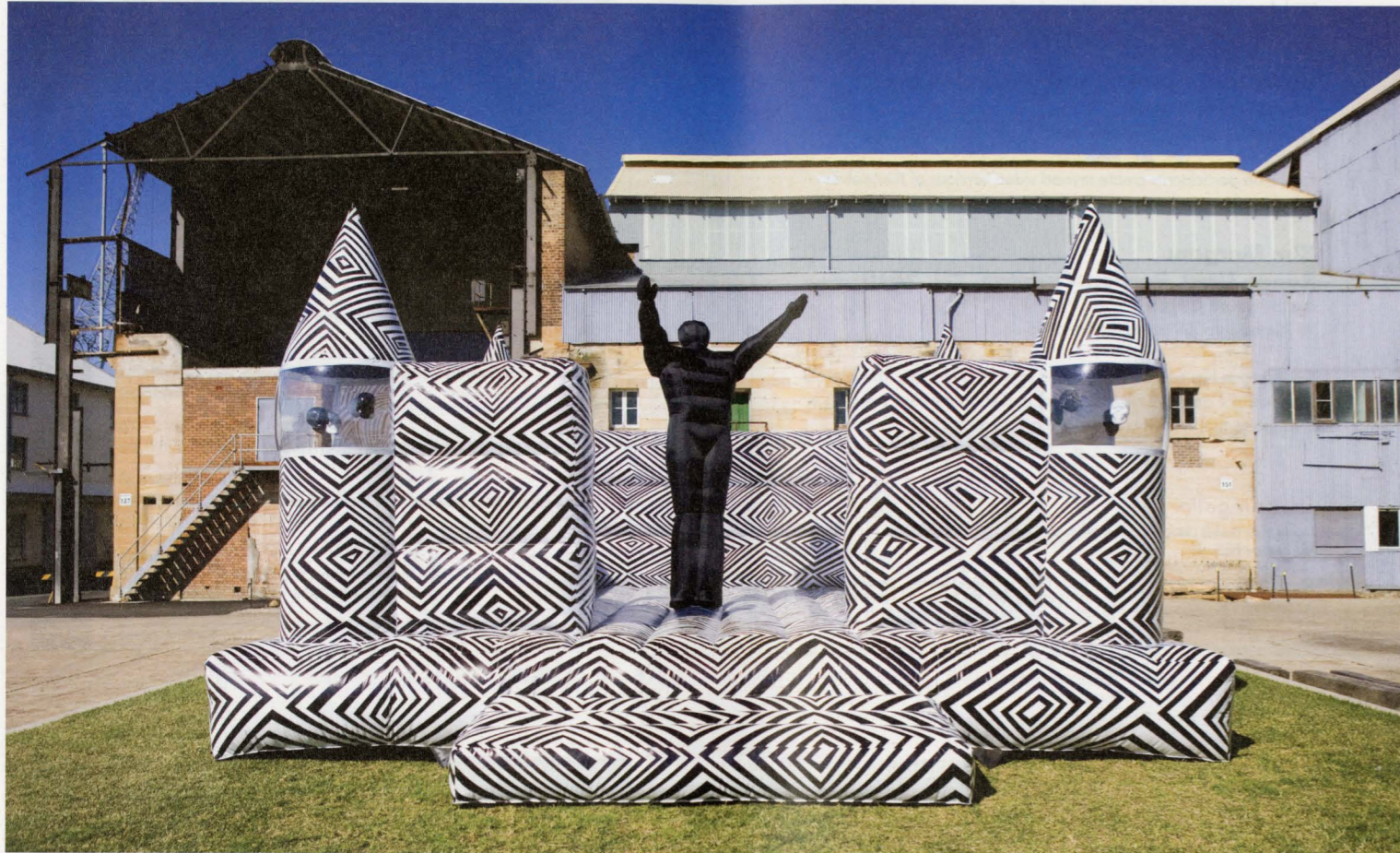
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LITTLE DISTANCE



Brook Andrew. *Jumping Castle War Memorial*, 2010. Courtesy: the artist and Tolarno Galleries, Melbourne.

BETWEEN US

On the eve of an explosion of international Indigenous art exhibitions, curators David Garneau and Margaret Farmer explore resonances in Australian and Canadian Aboriginal art.

Deep in Sydney Harbour sits Cockatoo Island, the major exhibition site of the 17th Biennale of Sydney, *The Beauty of Distance: Songs of Survival in a Precarious Age*. The first work you encounter at this former penitentiary is a striking black-and-white inflated castle. If you choose (and this ethical question is the heart of the work) to bounce on its Wiradjuri designs and around the black figure with up-raised arms in its centre, you will soon notice through the windows of the corner turrets decapitated heads bobbling with your motions. Brook Andrew's *Jumping Castle War Memorial* (2010) is an ironic counter-monument. It can easily be moved to wherever victims are to be temporarily remembered and survivors enjoy their good luck.

A significant achievement of the 2010 Biennale of Sydney is curator David Elliott's integration of Aboriginal art into the collection in a manner that allows each work to dialogue with the rest of the exhibition, and the rest of the world, while maintaining the surprise of difference. Christopher Pease (Australia) and Kent Monkman's (Canada) independent reworkings of 19th century



Gordon Bennett. *Possession Island*, 1991. Courtesy: the artist.

“discovery” paintings echo each other, reminding viewers of colonialism's global reverberations. Placing some of Annie Pootoogook's most challenging drawings in this context reveals her as not only a radical Inuit artist, but also a poignant observer of near-universal domestic dramas. Elliott's inclusion of Kwakwak'wakw carver Beau Dick's masks, a massed group of larrikitj (memorial poles) by 41 Yolngu artists from North-East Arnhem Land, and the selection of artists of mixed European and Indigenous ancestry from a number of countries, unsettles the boundary between traditional and contemporary and challenges ideas of racial and cultural purity.

Mainstream interest in Indigenous art as Art is exploding and Aboriginal curators are managing the fuse. No fewer than four international exhibitions are planned for Canada and Australia in the next three years. Brenda Croft — with the assistance of Aboriginal curators from New Zealand (Megan Tamati-Quennell), the USA (Kathleen Ash-Milby), and Canada (David Garneau) — is curating *stop (the)gap/mind(the)gap*, a multi-venue exhibition of moving image art by 20 Aboriginal artists from these four countries to accompany the Adelaide

Film Festival in February, 2011. A few months later, First Nations curators Lee-Ann Martin, Jenny Western, Steven Loft and Candice Hopkins will unveil *Close Encounters: The Next 500 Years*, a 30-artist show in Winnipeg. In 2012, the authors of this article will present *Unsettling*, an exhibition of Aboriginal artists from Australia and Canada that will tour both countries. And in 2013, Greg Hill, Christine Lalonde, Candice Hopkins and an international advisory team are producing, for The National Gallery of Canada, the first of a promised series of quinquennials of international Indigenous art.

These exhibitions are the result of a confluence of forces. The engaging and complex art made by Aboriginal artists can no longer be ignored or ghettoized. A critical mass of Aboriginal curators with intellectual tools, confidence and collegial support are now in positions to make these exhibitions happen. At the same time, non-Indigenous intellectuals, institutional supporters and audiences recognize the significance of Aboriginal art and scholarship to the meaning and identity of their nations. The most important force, however, is a growing global Indigenous consciousness.

David Garneau: Indigenous artists and curators in both Canada and Australia are descendants of peoples colonized by the British Empire who struggle to reckon, resist, recover and re-form. Our bond is intellectual and affective. While the legacy of colonialism inhabits the bodies, hearts, minds and spirits of individual persons uniquely, it is only by recognizing the impact of our collective formation as Aboriginal people that individual healing and social change can happen. Discovering that other Aboriginal people, on a continent more than 14,000 km away, were also taken from their homes and families, deprived of their land, language and culture, were abused, made to feel ashamed and less than human, and as a result often turned to the slow destruction of themselves and others comes as a jolt of enlightenment. This knowledge locates personal, familial and tribal experience within a matrix of global power and calculated strategy.

The privilege of meeting these folks and discovering the very little distance between us is a visceral experience that changes lives. When I heard Richard Bell describe his years on the street, I was reminded of Norval Morrisseau. Listening to a circle of elders at the Parramatta Artist Studios talk about being taken from their families and re-educated in Mission schools, I could have been on any reserve or community centre back home. Listening to a fair-skinned Aboriginal artist talking about the complexity of negotiating her identities, I feel at home. When Vernon Ah Kee returned to Australia from his first trip to Canada in 2006, which included a visit to a reserve, he reported back to his mates, “it is not that it’s the same; it’s that it is exactly the same.” [1]

Margaret Farmer: The country’s parallel histories, including the Apologies to the Stolen Generations each country made in 2008, [2] are consciousness-raising for a non-Indigenous person too. The twin apologies demonstrate that each country is trying to compose itself as a just society, that amongst the majority of the non-Indigenous population there is a sense that there are things to be sorry for and things to rectify.

Cheaper flights, the internet and enlightened arts funding also contribute to the efflorescence of Aboriginal exchanges. The international exhibitions and travels of artists Rebecca Belmore and Edward Poitras (both of whom represented Canada at Venice Biennales) and curators Gerald McMaster and Lee-Ann Martin, and Australian artists such as Rover Thomas, Vernon Ah Kee and Fiona Foley, and curators Brenda Croft and Hetti Perkins, all generated interest in contemporary Aboriginal art and possible collaborations. Cathy Mattes’ Australia/Canada artist exchange (2001) was an early effort. The most significant catalyst was the curatorial collective — Lee-Ann Martin (Canada), Brenda Croft (Australia), Megan Tamati-Quennell (New Zealand) and Margaret Archuleta (USA) — who formed to plan an international exhibition of Indigenous art, *Jesus Loves Me*. In 2003, most of the group met in Saskatchewan and then held a seven-week international Aboriginal artist’s and curator’s residency at the Banff Centre. This was followed by a symposium that

spawned an important book, *Making Noise!* (2004). While the show did not go on, the physical fact of Australian Aboriginal artists and curators meeting their First Nations counterparts went a long way to encouraging future exchanges.

Another crucial step occurred in 2008, when the Canada Council’s Jim Logan organized a delegation of five First Nations and Métis curators to tour the Biennale of Sydney and to visit Aboriginal galleries, artists, curators and elders. He led another team of six to the Venice Biennale (2009) and a third group of six to New Zealand and Sydney in 2010. These scouting trips had a dramatic impact on many of the participants and demonstrated to Australians that Canada was committed to long-term partnerships. [3]

In advance of the coming exhibitions, the authors of this article thought it timely to discuss a few of Australia’s most interesting artists and how their practices resonate with their Canadian counterparts. Three broad themes guide the remainder of this article: the desire to signify and to display different ways of knowing and being; appropriation as a means of demonstrating bicultural competence, and as a tool to challenge stereotypes and disrupt national myths; and embodied resistance, the use of performance art and portraiture as a means of asserting presence and difference while also demonstrating similarities and a common humanity.

One of the most engaging paintings in the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, is the huge (207.7 x 670.8 cm) *Napperby Death Spirit Dreaming* (1980) by the Anmatyerre brothers Tim Leura and Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri. Some have difficulty accepting this sort of work as contemporary art, primarily because it is only barely informed by the Western tradition and seems apart from current discourse. But, as NGV curator Judith Ryan explained during a tour, the fact of making this painting and its presence in the gallery is a political act. Through works of art, Aboriginal people assert their existence, display their intelligence and declare their humanity — facts not always considered self-evident. In addition, this painting is a map that not only indicates a long-term relationship with the land but is also a symbolic record of events. Similar documents have been used in Australia and Canada to assert land claims. Finally, the painting’s three “insert” sections are Clifford Possum’s revisitations of paintings he produced earlier. This inventive self-referential time travel demonstrates that this work, like its artists, is not fixed by tradition, but is an extension of it.

While *Napperby Death Spirit Dreaming* contains Aboriginal symbolism and world-view, its medium (acrylic), support (canvas) and location (gallery) are imports, making this an amalgam of influences. Similarly, printmaking is not indigenous to the Canadian Arctic. So Kenojuak Ashevak’s radiant prints are also contemporary cultural hybrids. They represent an Inuit visuality expressed through an introduced media. Annie Pootoogook’s recent pressing beyond what



Jeff Thomas. *Brant 1710* (C-092419), *Steve Thomas 1990*, 1990. Courtesy: the artist.

was considered acceptable subject matter reveals the limits of a (market’s) gaze that wants to freeze Aboriginal art within an imaginary, pure, pre-contact savage idyll.

Cultural mixing is the condition of living Aboriginal art. The most self-conscious mixing, usually deployed by university-trained artists, is appropriation. The borrowing of pre-existing works of art, and twisting them to make new works and meanings, has been the dominant method of contemporary Aboriginal art in both countries. Its value is that bicultural artists can show that they know the dominant discourse but are not contained by it. They use the Empire’s tools to critique it. The technique is primarily deployed to ridicule stereotypes (Terence Houle, Richard Bell) and with Aboriginalia (Destiny Deacon and Tony Albert etc), and to trouble and revise accepted historical narratives (Kent Monkman, Dianne Jones, Fiona Foley, Christopher Pease, Daniel Boyd etc).

Daniel Boyd repaints portraits of “discoverers” and early governors as pirates. Captain Cook is issued an eye patch and parrot, and Boyd’s portrait of King George III features the artist’s decapitated head in a specimen jar — a reminder of the Aboriginal people slaughtered soon after contact and also the human remains collected and exported to Europe in the name of science. Christopher Pease’s *Target* (2005) is a pleasant, early 19th century image of Aboriginals and Settlers at the beach. However, superimposed on the scene is a big red target. A closer look reveals that the Settlers are armed and the Aboriginals are not. Another level of Pease’s play is that the

target symbol resonates not only with similar concentric circle and spiral designs seen in various Aboriginal visual vocabularies, but also with those in Jasper Johns’ famous target paintings.

The master of the visual mash-up, however, is Gordon Bennett. Throughout the 90s, Bennett took “nation-making” images — for example, the raising of the British flag to claim Australian soil in *Possession Island* (1991) — and reworked them in a complex composite visual language derived from, amongst others, Pollock and Mondrian. In his groundbreaking book *Possessions: Indigenous Art/Colonial Culture* (1999), Nicholas Thomas shows that Bennett, who “has something in common with the vandal who defaces the monument ... goes beyond mere decapitation or graffiti to suggest a reconstitution of national narrative, albeit one inescapably defined by pain, violence and contradiction.” [4] Thomas also compares Bennett’s appropriation of modernist styles with that of First Nations artists, particularly Lawrence Paul Yuxwelputun’s seizure of Dali’s surrealism. [5] In his series *Notes to Basquiat* (1998–2003), Bennett internationalizes the local experience of colonization and mainstream modern art. He re-appropriates Basquiat (who confessed to borrowing his x-ray style from Australian Aboriginal art) and clowns as Pollock (who was famously inspired by Navajo sand painting) to produce a polyphony of visual and cultural voices. In the end, he disturbs any complacency any of us (Aboriginal and non-Indigenous alike) have about identity, history, or the very meaning of our lives: “If I were to choose a single word to describe my art practice it would be the word ‘question.’ ... To be free is to be able to question

the way power is exercised, disputing claims to domination. Such questioning involves our 'ethos,' our ways of being, or becoming who we are. To be free we must be able to question the ways our own history defines us." [6]

What does it mean to be Aboriginal if you dress like every other suburbanite? How much of Aboriginality is genetic and how much cultural display?

The limit of irony is its strength. It is a great tool for deconstructing false representations, but is not so fine an instrument for constructing alternatives or showing how one really feels. One way to provide a critique without dissolving in irony is through performance art, especially embodied resistances where the artist uses his or her body in gestures that hover between acting and the seeming display of actual emotions

and thoughts. In *The Named and the Unnamed* (2002), Rebecca Belmore (Anishinabe) calls out the names of murdered women from the neighbourhood from which they disappeared. This type of dramatic irony creates an uncanny tension in the listener. We know the women are dead and cannot hear their names, but does this woman know that? Her calling them into being, giving them back their names, creates an almost tangible presence and more palpable feeling of loss.

Performance art is popular among Aboriginal Canadian artists (Lori Blondeau, Skeena Reece, Adrian Stimson, Reona Brass, Cheryl L'Hirondelle, et al.) but less so in Australia, though perhaps Richard Bell can be seen as a nearly full-time practitioner. In addition to painting (*Aboriginal Art: It's a White Thing*) [7] and videos in which he is the star, Bell is infamous for his in-your-face attitude, tasteless T-shirts (*White Girls Can't Hump, I Only Date Crack Whores*), and kangaroo tail ties. He is a contrarian who absorbs and reflects a lifetime of racism.

Innumerable First Nations and Métis artists have taken up digital and video cameras (Shelly Niro, KC Adams, Rebecca Belmore, Tanya Harnett, Rosalie Favell, Dana Claxton, Thirza Cuthand, Terrence Houle, and many others) not only to create portraits as a means of asserting presence and combating stereotypes, but also to present Aboriginal lived experience from an Indigenous point of view. In the series *Four Kings: 1997-1710* Jeff Thomas (Iroquois) juxtaposes photographs of contemporary, urban Aboriginal people with their ancestors' painted portraits in an effort to simultaneously create proximity and distance between the images. The viewer scans for similarities in the two faces to establish likenesses. This effort is quickly disturbed by the thought that the painting is created by a European and the gaze may have contaminated the representation.

The Indigenous-produced photograph may be more true, but is it? Other questions arise. What does it mean to be Aboriginal if you dress like every other suburbanite? How much of Aboriginality is genetic and how much cultural display? The beauty of these post-ironic images is that they resist ideological closure or fixed positions.

In Australia, the last 25 years has also seen the rise of Aboriginal portraiture, particularly in photography, in which founding artists of Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative, such as Tracey Moffatt, Michael Riley (1960-2004), Fiona Foley and Brenda Croft, have played a significant part. [8] The depth and breadth of this movement was recently showcased in *Half Light: Portraits from Black Australia*, curated by Heti Perkins and Jonathan Jones at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney (2008). The exhibition gathered images by the first Aboriginal professional photographer, Mervyn Bishop, as well as diverse works from Richard Bell, Destiny Deacon, Ricky Maynard, Peter Yanada McKenzie, extending to a younger generation that includes Vernon Ah Kee, Brook Andrew, Tony Albert, Genevieve Grieves, r e a, Darren Siwes and Christian Thompson.

Ah Kee may be best known for large drawings, portraits of himself and family members living and deceased. The series began with his research of photographs taken of Aboriginal people by anthropologist Norman Tindale from the 1930s to the 1960s. Ah Kee located those of his ancestors and repatriated them through the act of drawing. The tenderness with which he resuscitates portraits to represent his kin as individuals and within familial relationships rather than as subjects for scientific study, restores their humanity.

Like Jeff Thomas, Brook Andrew has a longstanding engagement with the archive. His appropriation and re-labelling of a 19th century photograph of a handsome warrior, *Sexy and Dangerous* (1996), questions the supposed sexual anaesthesia of the ethnographic gaze. Gary Lee, too, is interested in showing the beauty of Indigenous men, both past and present. His work provides counter-images to the prevailing attitude: "The only images most people can summon when they think of Aboriginal masculinity are negative and even offensive: we are either drunken and violent or petrol sniffing, sexual predators." [9] The drive to expand the ethnographic imaginary continues with Bindi Cole's recent portraits of Tiwi Island "sistagirls" (men who dress and live as women).

Family is a conspicuous concern for artists in both countries. Representing family is a means of testifying to the depth of presence and an opportunity to literally show the faces and tell the stories of those not used to signifying. In *Federation Painting* (2001), Julie Dowling presents an Aboriginal portrait for each of 10 decades of Australian Federation. The history begins with her great-great-grandmother Melbin, followed by her great-aunt Dot — who at 8 was taken from her mother and placed in an orphanage by her white father. Later it is her grandmother Mollie, who survived the bombing of

Tim Leura Tjapaltjarri and Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri. *Napperby Death Spirit Dreaming*, 1980. Courtesy: National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.



Broome in World War II and had to pass as white to keep her job. Dowling's self-portrait chronicles the issues of her time — Native Title, Reconciliation, an Apology and Treaty demands. This strategy parallels those of Canadian artists such as Jane Ash Poitras and George Littlechild. Both are Plains Cree artists adopted and raised within non-Aboriginal families, making their exploration of self and family all the more critical and poignant. Littlechild's *Family Tree* (2007) features a black-and-white photo of a man flanked by images of his parents, their parents, and his parents' parents. His mother's family is First Nations, his father's is European. The changing modes of dress demonstrate the changing time periods and impacts of colonial policy.

Until recently, Indigenous activists could draw fairly clean lines between "us and them," First Peoples and colonizers. However, the increasing immigration of non-European peoples, the recognition of the Métis, and artists' acknowledgment in their art of their own mixed-race and bicultural realities and the general complexity of being and belonging, have coaxed artists into broadening their vision. Artist-historian Fiona Foley's photograph *Nulla 4 Eva* (2009) considers the Cronulla race riots of 2005 in which white Australians chanted to recent immigrants "We grew here, you flew here." The irony being that the chanters were themselves usurpers. Foley shows a Cronulla in which the beach is defended by a coalition of Aboriginal youth and a burqua-clad woman against two aggressive alcohol-drinking Australian youth. The work is remarkable, in part, for its inclusion of a mixed-race cast and a redrafting of the lines of racial solidarity, and for considering issues beyond the usual preoccupations of Aboriginal art.

White, Aboriginal and Chinese people also populate Tracey Moffatt's photographs, but many also show individuals of indeterminate ethnicity in near-universal scenarios. Her subject is more often class than race. The subtitle of *Door Dash, 1979* is: "to get into their house every night, the children had to dash past their drunken father at the door." The heart-breaking picture scalds because the image could come from anywhere. Moffatt deftly recovers personal and local histories while maintaining legibility for viewers beyond her neighbourhood and time. The image also stings because while we

may intellectually want to trace the roots of this scenario in colonialism, residential and mission school abuse, such theorizing is of little use in helping these particular children.

There is no accounting for contemporary Aboriginal art. It is too various and voluminous to be so easily corralled — especially in this small space. However, even a cursory survey of the work recently produced in Australia and Canada reveals more patterns of similarity than difference. Some of this can be accounted for by parallel colonial histories, and some by the fact that these artists are not isolated but are fully engaged in the current art world. That this accounting is occurring at all, however, is the point. Indigenous art has finally arrived, en masse, on the (art) world stage. □

Notes

1. Vernon Ah Kee, at the symposium "Art and Appropriation Post The Apology," convened by Margaret Farmer at the College of Fine Arts, University of New South Wales, 1-2 May, 2010.
2. February 2008 in Australia, June 2008 in Canada.
3. Garneau was a member of all three delegations.
4. Nicholas Thomas, *Possessions: Indigenous Art/Colonial Culture*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1999, p. 200.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 205.
6. Gordon Bennett. "The Manifest Toe" in Ian McLean and Gordon Bennett, *The Art of Gordon Bennett*, Craftsman House: Roseville East, 1996, pp. 10-12.
7. Richard Bell, *Bell's Theorem*, 2002, acrylic on canvas boards, 173 x 127 cm.
8. Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative was founded in Sydney in 1987 and was the subject of the exhibition *Boomalli: 20 Years On* curated by Jonathan Jones, Art Gallery of New South Wales, 22 August – 28 October 2007.
9. Daniel Browning, "Gary Lee: The Outsider", in *Blak on Blak, Artlink*, Vol 30 No 1, p. 78.

MARGARET FARMER is a curator at the National Institute for the Experimental Arts, University of New South Wales. Previous projects include the touring exhibition *Terra Alterius: Land of Another* and co-founding *SafARI*, the fringe exhibition to the Biennale of Sydney.

DAVID GARNEAU is curator, writer, artist and Associate Professor of Visual Arts at the University of Regina. He is currently exploring the Carlton Trail and roadkill as landscape subjects, and is working on curatorial projects in Australia and Zürich.



On The Road in The Sculpture Garden at La Maisons des artistes visuels, 2010. Photo: William Eakin.

CENTRE AND PERIPHERY:
 Lancelot Coar's
On The Road/ En Route
 1 July – 31 July, 2010
 Winnipeg and Surrounding areas
 Project Coordinator,
 Natasha Peterson
 REVIEW BY Jonah Corne &
 Andrew Harwood

A collaborative art and social experiment by five Winnipeg artist-run centres and public galleries, *On the Road* featured a vintage 1976 Airstream trailer that carried works by Manitoban artists to regions where contemporary art is rarely exhibited. These included suburban neighborhoods and rural Manitoban villages. As the Airstream visited these places, their community members were invited to assist in the construction of

a semi-improvised, tent-like structure that would then house live performances, video screenings and workshops for creating small art objects. Lancelot Coar, a professor of architecture at the University of Manitoba, spearheaded the project, driving the truck, creating the template for the structure and performing with Winnipeg avant-garde art troupe The Abzurbs. The itinerary included St. Claude, Victoria Beach, Peguis First Nation and locations in Winnipeg.

Each of the sponsoring institutions provided support, along with ephemera and catalogues relating to recent exhibitions at their respective home spaces. The program of short videos was drawn from the archive at Video Pool, and emphasized works by French-Canadian and Aboriginal artists. Dressed in outlandish costumes and masks, and resembling a kind of wandering brigade of burlesquers or a traveling freak show, The Abzurbs did not so much perform for

the audience as they served as catalysts that allowed them to absorb the audience into their spontaneous antics.

By mobilizing all of this material into a mobile curatorial project, *On The Road* posed a fascinating set of questions about the relationship between contemporary art and spatial peripheries. First and foremost, how does a commitment to “bring contemporary art to people who have limited access due to geographical barriers” (as the project’s mandate reads) not fall into the trap of reproducing the hierarchy of centre and periphery, and of coming across as some sort of paternalistic philanthropy?

The project smartly addressed this issue by refusing to impose an agenda on its intended publics, using a highly provisional and open-ended infrastructure in a spirit of informality and experimentation. In the various sites where the project stopped, some residents



<top left> *On The Road* in The Sculpture Garden at La Maisons des artistes visuels, 2010. Photo: William Eakin; <top right> *On The Road* in the parking lot at Kenaston Ave and McGillivray Boulevard, Winnipeg, 2010. Photo: William Eakin. <bottom left> *On The Road* in the parking lot at Kenaston Ave and McGillivray Boulevard, Winnipeg, 2010. Photo: William Eakin.

gathered to participate while others looked on and kept moving. For those who did stay, wonderful and intimate art experiences emerged. This flexibility was echoed in the physical make-up of the temporary structure. Coars remarked that he chose the fibreglass poles because they are pliant, but only to a very limited degree.

The project seemed to have in mind that rural peoples have frequently been the content of Western art, but have for the most part been excluded from the canon as actual cultural producers. *On the Road* challenged this pattern by encouraging collaboration. In

St Claude, a historically Francophone town in rural Manitoba with a population of less than 600, over a dozen people turned out in the morning to contribute to the construction of the structure. In the afternoon, a group of children amassed for the workshops, and made 3-D collages out of recycled cd jewel cases and — in a perhaps inadvertent, but resonantly subversive twist — repurposed images cut out from old *National Geographic* magazines. In the evening, several adults arrived with their own lawn chairs to watch the program of short videos projected on one of the diamond-shaped panels of the structure, which became a makeshift theatre.

It was a telling comment on suburban culture that the least attended stop on the project's itinerary was the vast parking lot in front of an outsized Urban Barn outlet in one of Winnipeg's fastest-growing developments, South on Kenaston Boulevard. Few people, it seemed, were willing to stray from their routine of parking and shopping. Coars commented on the powerlessness of the intervention: "Maybe if we attached a SALE sign to the side of the trailer, more people might have approached to see what was happening."

Considered within a wider geographical context that encompasses the national and the global, *On the Road* might be read as an analogy for Winnipeg's own ambivalent status as a reputed hub of artistic activity that is at the same time far removed from the major art centres of the world, a place both connected and set apart. In this sense, the urban-based institutions involved in the project do not fit comfortably on either side of the access/non-access binary that would appear to inform the project as a whole. In fact, the project examines the very notions of what constitutes the centre(s) of cultural production and reception.

After an auspicious beginning, it is hoped that *On The Road* will be able to continue its journey to many more destinations in the future.

ON THE ROAD was co-presented by La Maison Des Artistes Visuels, Urban Shaman, aceartInc., Platform: Centre For Photographic + Digital Arts, and Video Pool Media Arts Centre.

JONAH CORNE teaches film studies in the Department of English, Film, and Theatre at the University of Manitoba.

ANDREW HARWOOD is a multidisciplinary queen of all media (well, a few), freelance writer and curator with lazy — often pot-induced ambitions to stalk hirsute gentlemen.

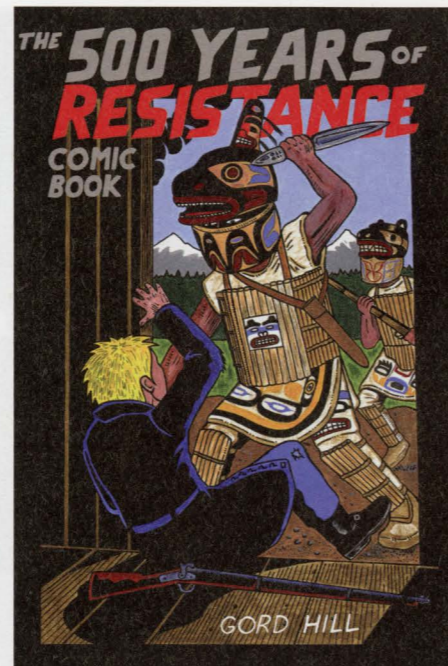
RE-VISITING THE WARRIOR: Gord Hill's *The 500 Years of Resistance Comic Book* Arsenal Pulp Press, 2010

REVIEW BY Lisa Myers

The 500 Years of Resistance Comic Book, a graphic novel written and illustrated by Gord Hill, celebrates a history of resistance against colonialism from the perspective of Indigenous warriors of the Americas. This past July marked the 20th anniversary of Kanien'kehaka (Mohawk) resistance to the proposed construction of a golf course and resort over their sacred lands and burial sites, known through mainstream media as The Oka Crisis. Thoughts of the summer of 1990 evoke mixed memories of tension, conflict and a coming together as activists on reserves and in urban centres demonstrated in support of the Kanien'kehaka of Kahnésatà:ke. The anniversary provides an apt backdrop for the launch of this graphic novel and gives impetus for discussion of the concept of warrior.

An activist and artist from the Kwakwaka'wakw Nation with Tlingit and Scottish ancestry, Gord Hill opens the book with a preface that emphasizes the history of Indigenous resistance as a counter-narrative to the history taught in schools and portrayed through the media. Using comic illustrations and minimal text, Hill provides a context and backstory that aims to inspire political awareness and resistance in response to current neocolonial oppression. Activist and scholar Ward Churchill adds additional stories in his introductory essay *Reflections on Gord Hill's 500 Years and the Nature of Indigenous Resistance*, asserting the importance of knowing the past to strategize for the future.

Hill's illustrated chronology spans the years 1492 to 1995 and portrays Indigenous people on lands from South America to North America. The extensive range of dates, regions and people represented in this



<cover> Gord Hill. *The 500 Years of Resistance Comic Book*. Arsenal Pulp Press, 2010. <interior page> Gord Hill. *The 500 Years of Resistance Comic Book*. Arsenal Pulp Press, 2010.

comic demonstrate the two years of research Hill undertook in writing and illustrating this book. Each historical event has its own section and includes a small map of the region. Using text, Hill concisely describes the core of each conflict and emphasizes the dates of events to convey the legacy of Indigenous resistance. The drawings are rich with tex-

ture and depth. He renders the figures' faces with stoic and stern expressions, paying particular attention to detail in architecture and clothing — most evident in his depiction of the Mexican Eagle Warrior. To underscore extreme injustices the illustrations portray graphic and brutal aspects of violent clashes between European and Indigenous people.

The warrior resistance represented in this graphic novel includes more than 20 battles, including the 1553 attack on a Spanish fort in southern Chile by the Mapuche led by Lautaro, and the 1850s battles between the U.S. Cavalry, led by Custer, against Crazy Horse and thousands of Lakota warriors. While Hill's project focuses on a particular version of resistance, it overlooks the multiplicity of stories that depart from the warrior persona. Acts of resistance like the retention of Indigenous languages in the face of punishment and trauma, or Anishinaabe women peacefully protesting against a dump site to prevent the pollution of ground water, all have a "fighting spirit" and take courage and sometimes kindness to achieve the desired outcome.

Hill's choice of the comic book medium is itself a form of resistance, as the origins of political and social realism in graphic novels can be traced back to the underground comic books that emerged from the counterculture of the 1960s. The comic book as an artistic medium gave political and adult subject matter a covert form from which to disseminate ideas and information. *The 500 Years of Resistance Comic Book* is an important contribution to the growing genre of historical graphic novels like *Louis Riel*, *Maus* and *Persepolis*, which give perspectives on history that are largely underrepresented. Hill's *The 500 Years of Resistance Comic Book* underlines the significance of creating connections between the histories of Indigenous people in resisting colonialism.

LISA MYERS makes art, cooks and plays music, all while working towards her Master of Fine Arts in Criticism and Curatorial Practice at the Ontario College of Art and Design.

OURS, AND THE HANDS THAT HOLD US: *Playing by the Rules: Alternative Thinking/Alternative Spaces* apexart, 2010

REVIEW BY Suzanne Morrissette



Steven Rand (ed). *Playing by the Rules: Alternative Thinking/Alternative Spaces*. apexart, 2010.

Discussing alternative ideas and spaces seems just as much an exercise in locating the norm, as it is a matter of articulating possible alternatives. Ranging from articles that consider contemporary alternative spaces in art, to the normalization of alternative thinking, *Playing by the Rules* questions whether spaces can remain "alternative" over the long term. The collection contains 13 essays from artists, historians, curators, writers, poets, critics, philosophers, theoreticians, and professors, including a preface by Stephen Rand, an introduction by Heather Kouris, and essays by Pablo Helguera, Robert Atkins, Biljana Ciric, René Block, Irene Tsatsos, Raphael Rubenstein, Marina Grzinic, Julie Ault, Renaud Ego, Boris Groys, Naeem Mohaiemen, Winslow Burleson, and Sofija Grandakovska. Together the essays develop a theoretical and practical space for rethinking and assessing the continued relevance of alternative spaces.

Contributor Pablo Helguera calls contemporary alternative space into question in his article "Alternative Time and Instant Audience (The Public Program as an Alternative Space)." Helguera considers the significance of temporal and social contexts, arguing that it is the responsibility of the alternative space to respond appropriately to a changing world. Other contributors reconsider the limitations of having physical spaces. Julie Ault reflects on this in her essay "Of Several Minds Over Time." Most alternative spaces are found housed within a fixed structure, and as Ault points out, "financial stability takes centre stage when salaries and rent are past due. Under these conditions it is difficult to be spontaneous or debate essential questions about philosophy or purpose." Internet based projects have in recent years become one alternative to this condition. Satellite locations offer another. Along these lines, temporary or nomadic exhibitions, according to contributor Raphael Rubenstein, can also provide a model for an alternative to the alternative space that can be more reflexive and better manage its own lifespan and project goals.

There are other elements to consider as well, like how structural, moral and monetary relationships impact on the ways in which alternative spaces operate. Various alliances and interdependencies can be useful sites for exchange, but they can also create conflict. Curator Biljana Ciric reminds her reader, "Don't bite the hand that feeds you." Alternatively, sticking to your guns, setting new priorities, modifying them, or changing them altogether, can be the kind of matching of mandate to practice that is achieved through a heightened awareness of social context, never allowing oneself to get too comfortable in one spot.

On the ground, it is apparent that things are changing, and that hybrid spaces are blurring boundaries where perhaps they had previously been more articulated. Spaces are not necessarily so separate. Partnerships, experimental projects, and the critical texts that many artist-run centres here in Canada now

Installation view of Frank Shebageget: *Light Industry*, 2010. Photo: David Barbour. Courtesy: Carleton University Art Gallery.

deliver, either as integral or supplementary components of their programming, can attest to this idea. Reflexivity is the mechanism that drives alternative spaces. If these spaces are correspondingly affected by their social environment, they can express those changes effectively through their programming.

These actions are not as homogenous as their shared terminologies might suggest on the surface. They are informed by what is permissible on a local, national and global scale, just as the reception of this book will hold different applications depending on where or how it is accessed. As this text proves, the task is to consider many alternatives at once, entangling them in order to reinvent possibilities for exchange. Discussions about alternative practices provide a shared space for each contributor, ensuring a continuum (however tessellated) of viable critical dialogue that consciously returns to the site of unstable critical exchange as the surrounding social conditions change, endlessly.

SUZANNE MORRISSETTE is an artist, writer, and curator who divides her time between Winnipeg, Manitoba and Toronto, Ontario. She is in her final year of her MFA in Criticism and Curatorial Practices at the OCAD Ontario College of Art and Design

MODERN METAPHORS: Frank Shebageget's *Light Industry* Carleton University Art Gallery 10 May – 1 August, 2010

REVIEW BY Deborah Kirk

In *Light Industry*, Frank Shebageget's collection of work operates across cultural categories. Applying both narrative devices and perceptual strategies, Native handcraft traditions and Modernist practices, his work defies easy classification, and in the process articulates certain sympathies between two divergent modes of representation.

Despite a range of media that includes drawing, installation and video pieces, the exhibition is characterized by formal restraint. *Lodge* (2008), is an adaptation of an early work in which the artist faithfully reproduced in miniature the entire fleet of de Havilland's Beaver floatplanes (1,692 models in all) from basswood, steel nails and glue. The replicas' humble but meticulously handcrafted fabrication contrast with the original's industrial production — now an icon of Canadian engineering and design. Ubiquitous in travel to remote northern

communities, the Beaver has become synonymous with modern innovation, resource speculation and, by association, the exploitation of Native Peoples and lands in the pursuit of commercial interests. Piled high, this "beaver dam" points to the practice of hydro electric power generation, the displacement of communities and the devastation of vast wilderness areas. In this sense, the work is a metaphor for the place of the artist's youth in rural Northern Ontario and more broadly, of that (and every) legacy of imperialism.

But in spite of those discursive references, the piece maintains a strong formal cohesion. In the repetition of identical forms, the unique objects combine to create an integrated whole. Similarly, his 2008 drawings *Flight Patterns* trace the component parts of each replica to become part industrial schematic, part abstract design. Beyond simple motif, geometry acts as the central organizing principle — the critical link between narrative elements and the expression of formal concerns. From the most basic structures at work in nature to those reflected in creative production from beadwork to architecture — each is reducible to a single note, an essential and autonomous expression of being. With this conflation of representational modes and productive methods, the works embody those complicated

Shani Mootoo. *English Lesson* (Video Still), 1991. Photo: the artist. Courtesy: VTape.

relationships that exist between and among cultural systems of value and exchange: social, geographic, philosophical and aesthetic.

For his new installation *Cell* (2010), Shebageget embraces an ever more restricted visual language and an increasingly intimate engagement with the object itself. Suspended in rows from a square aluminum frame, 49 nylon nets hang at regular intervals from steel fishing hooks to create a 100x100 cubic inch structure. Optical distortions triggered by movement around the form are echoed in the adjacent video *Waterfall* (2000); with its slowed image of water passing through the voids of a net, it stutters slightly, faltering, before looping to begin again. These visual anomalies provoke an interruption in normal perception and a heightened sense of self-awareness in relation to the form. Whereas the interpretation of previous work relied more heavily on external conditions, here, meaning is internalized in a direct appeal to the body's sensory and cognitive faculties. The nets, largely stripped of their original context and use, are now decisively reclassified as "art objects." With this emphasis on primary forms,

and shift in orientation from the didactic to the intuitive, the pieces point to a reworking of contemporary and Native practices within the tradition of Minimalist concerns.

By locating his work in that broader cultural context, Shebageget avoids those limitations imposed by the usual tropes that all too often define "Native Art" and identity. But beyond those cultural parameters, *Light Industry* serves as a model for new representational possibilities; never entirely abandoning one mode of expression for the other, these works vacillate between two systems of language and meaning, whose positions, upon closer examination, prove to be less dissimilar than is usually supposed. It is a tendency that appears to be gaining traction in the larger cultural field, with the value of certain Modern essentialist perspectives up for review as a means to recover and reconstitute identity and experience.

DEBORAH KIRK is an artist, writer and Master of Visual Studies candidate at the University of Toronto.

ARTS, ACTIVISM AND THE ACADEMY: *Resistance is Fertile* A Space Gallery

17 June – 31 July, 2010

CURATED BY Steve Loft

REVIEW BY Ashok Mathur

With video cameras going palm-size, the creation of home movies only as far away as the nearest iPhone, and the ubiquity of YouTube and its near-live broadcast potential, we can forget how the creative practice of new media was, not too long ago, an artistic form that required more than just the latest technology. Indeed, for many, it was a direct and unique expression of identity formation. Blended with the act of performance as it often was, video art was ideal for corporeal representation and, further, for representing the borders and boundaries imposed upon those digitized bodies.

Resistance is Fertile turns an eye back to video production in Canada from 1976 to 1999,

covering and exceeding the time frame of the heyday of identity politics as it occurred in arts, activism and the academy. Curator Steven Loft has managed to turn six discrete videos from very different artists into a cohesive narrative that enunciates a politics of race, colonization and sexual identity with both humour and depth. Drawing on significant artists whose work was on the cusp of anti-colonial creative practice, Loft sets up the series of videos as if they were in conversation with one another.

Using a combination of projection, video screens and retro monitors, the exhibition begins with pioneer Paul Wong's *60 UNIT: BRUISE* a 1976 work that played out curiosities between self and other and also, in typical Wong style, prophesized the tumultuous era of AIDS and its concomitant political crises. Simply conceived to take advantage of the then-novel medium of colour video, the video shows the artist drawing blood from a white man's arm, only to have it injected into his own back. As will occur when any foreign object enters the body in such manner, the injected area begins to discolour, to bruise, to offer forth a challenge to this confluence of bodily fluids. Juxtaposed with this silent video, is an early work by visual-artist-turned-novelist Shani Mootoo, whose raw and seemingly unedited *English Lesson* follows a fellow Trinidadian as he walks the audience through correct pronunciation, disabusing them of any desire to follow the Queen's English, replacing it with a version that parallels the cooking-show format that is the backdrop to this video. As viewers, we find ourselves laughing at the performance, and then catch ourselves within the implications of linguistic hierarchies.

Humour is the driving force behind Thirza Cuthand's *Through the Looking Glass*. The artist fills the shoes of an identity-seeking Alice, pulled this way and that by the racially designated Red and White queens. Part performance art, part theatrical play, the video embraces the value of asking ourselves questions rather than defining ourselves too readily. Such internal querying is accentuated in Ho Tam's video-poem, *Yellow Pages*, which

juxtaposes images in apparent contradiction, as an act that asks us to open our minds to the possibilities of difference. The cumulative effect of these videos is to take us through laughter, narrative and visual stimulation in order to see ourselves a bit more clearly.

The longest video in the show, Richard Fung's *Chinese Characters*, is the creative angle to what the artist writes about critically in his now-classic essay *Looking for My Penis*. Humour, video art and voice-over combine to address the cultural contexts in which the body of the gay Asian male is constructed, offering a possibility of what lies beyond. And Dana Claxton's *The Shirt* is a simple, yet powerful, metaphorical video art production that shows a (white) shirt washing up unannounced on the shores of this continent.

Together, this collection represents a considerable range of the concepts of colonial and anti-colonial discourse that permeated the years of identity-based art. While some might see this as work from a period whose time has passed, the politics of identity remain with us, made more complex in a world inflected by new forms of information dissemination, global capitalism, and resistance. Loft is able to show how the sequencing of these videos, and how they manifest different elements of identity and colonization are a visual realization of the bell hooks quotation that adorns one gallery wall in red, vinyl lettering: "until we are all able to accept the interlocking, interdependent nature of systems of domination and recognize specific ways each system is maintained, we will continue to act in ways that undermine our individual quest for freedom and our collective liberation struggle." This installation also reminds us of what Homi Bhabha calls vernacular cosmopolitanism, whereby minoritized communities may articulate a self-enunciation, but without the concomitant desire to insert themselves into a dominant discourse, that is, to make a claim of nationalist identity, for example. All these artists – and the way their work is collected and networked by Loft's curatorial vision – reflect this resistance to interpellation

by the mainstream, not through overt or blatant forms that are sometimes associated with identity politics, but through nuanced, subtle, and playful gestures. This installation brings us back to our histories, while allowing us to see the potentials such work has unleashed.

ASHOK MATHUR is Canada Research Chair in Cultural and Artistic Inquiry at Thompson Rivers University (Kamloops, BC), where he also directs the Centre for Innovation for Culture and the Arts in Canada (CiCAC).

FOILED ISLANDS: ABBAS AKHAVAN'S ISLANDS

The Third Line Gallery, Dubai

5 May – 17 June, 2010

REVIEW BY Sara Mameni

You are standing underneath a palm tree looking up. The tree's wide fronds extend out like an umbrella above your head. The sky is clear. It is sunny. Instead of protecting you from the sun, however, the tree glares back at you with its golden leaves. The trunk of the tree is solid black, but its flat fronds have been meticulously layered with sheets of 22-carat gold. The palm tree appears on a regular xeroxed sheet of paper. It is a grainy black and white image, except that the palm leaves are highlighted with thin layers of gold.

Palm trees are a familiar sight in Dubai. They are native to the region and were traditionally used as the main architectural material for building Barasti (palm-frond) houses. Barasti houses are built on wooden foundations, using palm trunks as columns and split fronds for roof hatchings and window screens. Such houses, however, are the last thing you should expect to see in Dubai today. A dense metropolis known for its rapid urban development and home to the world's tallest skyscraper (Burj Khalifa), Dubai is mostly built out of concrete, glass and steel poured over rocks and sand.

The most direct relationship between palm trees and architecture in contemporary Dubai is the reclamation project that extends the city into the Persian Gulf in the form of three artificial islands known as the Palm Islands. Built in the shape of palm trees by Al Nakheel development company (whose very name translates into "Palms" in Arabic), the Palm Islands sprout into the gulf multiplying its shoreline and beachside luxury properties. Dubai's real estate boom dates back to the early 2000s reaching its height in 2002. The bubble has since burst, leaving Dubai in a perpetual state of half-finished construction.

The Palm Islands were featured prominently in Abbas Akhavan's exhibition *Islands*. One side of the gallery was dedicated to a large map of Dubai drawn directly onto the wall using imitation gold leaf. Akhavan's golden map covered one entire wall, presenting the city from above, the ideal vantage point for viewing the Palms and the constellation of other artificial islands that surround them. Much like the desirable beachside properties that are sold in bits to foreign investors, Akhavan's golden map was also up for sale. For the duration of the exhibition, collectors could choose any section of the wall, carve it out and pay for it by the metre. Akhavan's prices varied based on the locations depicted on the map: the gallery wall was zoned according to the desirability of the lots represented there. As rectangular blocks were wedged out of the wall, the price of the remaining work increased and the hollow foundation of the drywall became apparent. Akhavan's map left the gallery in solid chunks to be reinstalled as luxury items in buyer's apartments or air-tight storage areas capable of preserving its golden sheen. All that was left behind was the white, powdery dust of the drywall, spotted with golden flakes on the gallery floor.

The void left behind on the wall was as constructed as the golden map itself. The analogy here is not the familiar rhetoric of a hollow land built over with luxury towers that are nothing but a facade. That language is suspiciously similar to colonial views of conquered



Abbas Akhavan. *Palm*, 2010. Courtesy: The Third Line (Dubai, UAE).

lands, presented as barren and uninhabited in order to justify settlement, foreign investment and development. Rather, the void left on the gallery wall is more plausibly seen as a fabricated absence related to the diminishing supplies of a very specific commodity that has shaped the economy — if not the very identity — of the Middle East: oil. Unlike its neighboring emirate Abu Dhabi, which is the largest oil producer in the UAE, Dubai's oil wells have become desiccated since the late 1990s, necessitating a search for another source of income. It is hardly a stretch to suggest that the real estate boom of the early 2000s was a direct result of a shift from an oil-based economy, dating back to the early 1960s, to one that concentrated on tourism, investment banking and service industries.

While Akhavan's golden map left the gallery with hollow pits, his photocopies pointed to alternative economies existing in the region.

Displayed in the same room as the large golden map, the xeroxed images depicted labor activities such as fishing, date farming and herding, where animals and vegetables, the main sources of survival, were covered in gold leaves. It is in these images that we see a man climbing a palm tree to collect dates or cut its broad fronds for a Barasti hut. Akhavan's black-and-white images, which stayed in the gallery while the map was gradually dissected, introduced a discourse parallel to the one provoked by Dubai's real estate market. These grainy shadows held firm against the wall, while the opposite wall was gradually dismantled and devoured.

SARA MAMENI is an artist and writer completing her PhD in Art History at the University of California. She is currently completing her dissertation on contemporary art in the Middle East while curating an exhibition on the theme of music and national identity.



<top> Abbas Akhavan. *Islands: Study for a Map*, 2010. Courtesy: The Third Line (Dubai, UAE).
 <bottom> Abbas Akhavan. *Islands: Study for a Map*, (detail) 2010. Courtesy: The Third Line (Dubai, UAE).



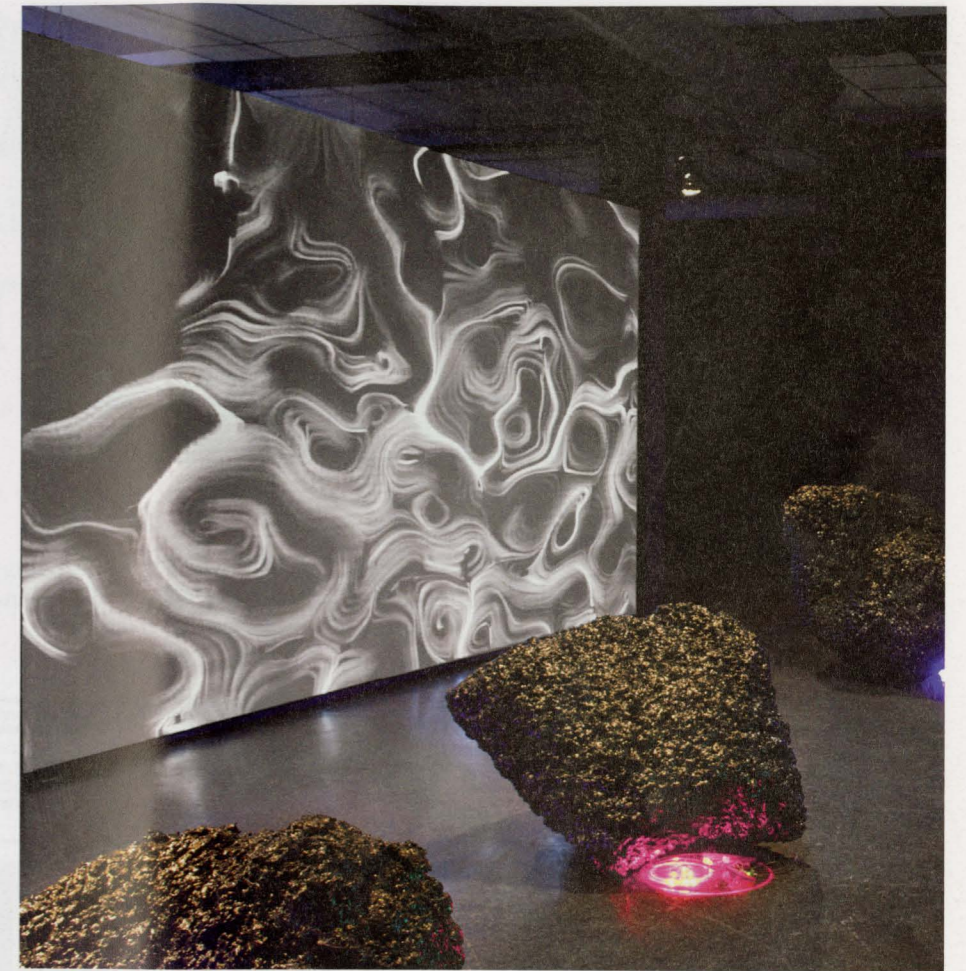
**DISRUPTING CURRENTS:
 CATCH + RELEASE,**
 8 – 30 April, 2010, VIVO,
 Vancouver

11 May – 30 May, 2010,
 Gulf of Georgia Cannery National
 Historical Site and Touring

REVIEW BY Rita Wong

Catch + Release is an exhibition that gives us valuable glimpses into the communities that rely on salmon along the Pacific coast. Ruth Beer, in collaboration with Kit Grauer and Jim Budd, has created a space to contemplate the importance of salmon and the ocean in our everyday lives. Incorporating sculpture, video interviews and interactive sensor technology, the show creates an immersive experience that juxtaposes the history of Steveston, a fishing village on the West Coast, with contemporary data from NEPTUNE, Canada's underwater ocean observatory. This juxtaposition creates a sense of the incomprehensible, the way in which a much vaster and more ancient underwater ecology simultaneously coexists with human-built narratives and economies, whether or not humans pay this larger context much attention.

This is a particularly timely show in light of the collapse of sockeye salmon runs along the West Coast in 2009, when millions of expected fish did not appear. As the fish go, so eventually will we. As Haida Gwaii carver Jim Hart phrases it in one of the multi-channel video screens, "Bears, eagles, trees, and humans all rely on salmon. The BC Coast is here because of the salmon, and people forget that. Salmon have been saving our lives for thousands of years." This show is worth considering within a larger cultural context that includes many First Nations' concerns for the salmon and Alexandra Morton's walk for salmon, *The Get Out Migration*, that saw over 5000 people rally outside the BC legislature on 8 May 2010 in support of wild salmon and in protest of the salmon farms



Installation view of *Catch + Release*, by Ruth Beer, 2010. Courtesy: the artist.

that are contributing to the destruction of wild salmon runs.

On May 3, Morton wrote on her blog as she walked the length of Vancouver Island in support of wild salmon:

...an entirely unexpected thing is happening. People are coming up to me and holding me — crying. They are speaking about schools without children, independent livelihoods lost, communities dying. This is about much more than fish. This is about the independent way of life that built these communities going extinct. As we walk I see a land of beautiful clear streams, fertile soil green with life, air sweet with flowers and then I enter towns so burdened by global corporate markets that they can no longer thrive on the richness of this land. There is something very wrong here, it is painful to witness and people are sad.

Somehow we have become blind to this public resource — millions of salmon flowing annually to our doorstep, feeding people and our economy province-wide. We have somehow been convinced that Atlantic salmon — dyed pink, vaccinated, fed Chilean fish, in pens where we cannot catch them, infesting our fish with lice — are better. We believe there are jobs even as the Norwegian companies are mechanizing as fast as they can to reduce the number of jobs. When people see us they know we have been duped and they don't know how to turn this around.

The Get Out Migration has been protected, blessed, gifted and honored by the First Nations who know best what has been lost. Everyday more people are joining our trek — weathering storms in tents, waving at a thousand honking motorists on the road to Victoria. Our ranks swell as we enter the towns, white doves have been released,



Ruth Beer. *Disrupting Currents of NEPTUNE's Observatory*, 2010. Courtesy: the artist.

First Nation canoes parallel us, songs have been written, feasts laid out, flotillas surround us, people are awakening.

I quote Morton at length here because she compellingly conveys the sense of urgency that moves thousands of people who hope to avoid the kind of collapse that happened with cod on the east coast in the 1990s.

There are loud awakenings, and quiet, humble awakenings going on all over the west coast. It is in this environment that *Catch + Release* particularly resonates with me, now and here. In the show's first incarnation at VIVO, the 9-channel video formed a discreet space in which to watch and listen to excerpts of footage that included perspectives from a former cannery line worker, a Haida Gwaii carver, a chef, a commercial fisherman and restaurant owner, an interpretive dancer, a professor of biology, a fishing boat worker, young tourists, and the head interpreter at the Gulf of Georgia Cannery.

Video footage of a hand massaging a woman's feet and calves, juxtaposed with a chef massaging salmon, reiterated the fleshy connection between the eater and the eaten through timed appearances and fades that suggest at once a complex, random system, as well as underlying structures that somehow link seemingly disparate elements of the food chain. On the other side of the wall of video screens was a dark, oceanic cave, occupied by five geological sculptures by

Ruth Beer as well as a screen on which one's movement into the space became subtly translated into shadows merging into the projection of real-time data from the Pacific Ocean, courtesy of NEPTUNE.

In its second, expanded incarnation, at the Gulf of Georgia Historic Site, the multi-channel video was placed on the left side of the cluster of five geological sculptures (with more footage added), and the projection from NEPTUNE on their right. Placed under twisting blue-green light, the sculptures took on a more uncanny presence as the centre from which to mull over the relationship between individual experiences of how salmon have changed people's lives and the ceaseless flow of ocean currents, as they become interrupted by humans walking past sensors. Children visiting the Gulf of Georgia Historic Site quickly found ways to play with the shapes they made on the screen; as I told one of them, "That's your shadow in the middle of the Pacific Ocean!" Salmon cans also glittered, gold-like, on two posts, some emitting sounds for visitors willing to take the risk of putting their ears up to the cans, like seashells.

The bringing together of the tactile and the technologically mediated, the human and the nonhuman, makes for an evocative questioning of place and identity. Alongside the work of carvers like Jim Hart, photographers like Barbara Zeigler (who photographed salmon being killed by sea lice as well as the creatures in the Broughton Archipelago that are endan-

gered by the loss of salmon), journalists like Alanna Mitchell (who points out that every second breath we take consists of oxygen produced by plankton from the world's oceans), and activists like Alexandra Morton, Beer and her collaborators are part of a growing groundswell that creatively responds to the dangers that oceans, streams, and ecosystems are currently facing. In so doing, they invite us to imagine better possible futures, in defiance of the reductive corporate logic that would kill off the wild salmon.

Catch + Release will continue to morph over the next couple of years, and there are plans to install the show in other coastal cities. It is my hope that in mapping stories of cultural and geographic transition, such work will remind us of how time might be circular, rather than linear, if we are wise in our actions. I want both a past and a future that include clean water, abundant wild salmon, and cultural paradigms that value the knowledge of indigenous peoples who have lived on this coast for thousands of years in careful balance with natural cycles.

The enigmatic flows of NEPTUNE remind us that there is much we don't know, and healthy respect for the ocean's depths and complexities could well be the first step toward reconnecting with the ecosystems that sustain our lives. In both human and non-human experiences, the simple lesson of gratitude for what the ocean provides is there to be learned.

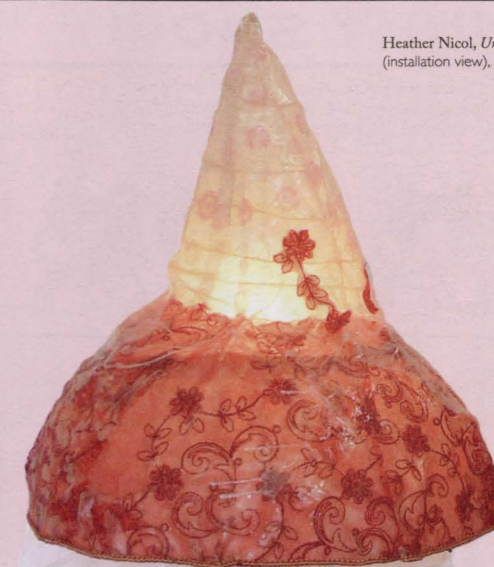
RITA WONG is the author of three books of poetry: *monkeypuzzle*, *forage*, and (with Larissa Lai) *sybil unrest*. She works at the Emily Carr University of Art and Design in Vancouver. Currently, she is researching the poetics of water.

UNDER SKIRT

A Peek at the Institution of Art

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Heather Nicol, *Under my Skin* (installation view), 2008

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WWW.MENDEL.CA

The Mendel Art Gallery gratefully acknowledges the support of the City of Saskatoon, the Saskatchewan Arts Board, The Canada Council for the Arts, and Saskatchewan Lotteries.



UPCOMING ARTISTS

FALL 2010

Billy McCarroll
Tyler Hodgins
Kristine Thoreson
Zeke Moores
Nicole Rayburn
Angela Gooliaf

Randy Niessen
Cécile Belmont
Robyn Moody
Lori Blondeau
Reona Brass
Jenine Marsh

Nancy Nisbet
Margaret Realica
Andrew Forster
Istvan Kantor
Mario Villeneuve
Stephen G.A. Mueller

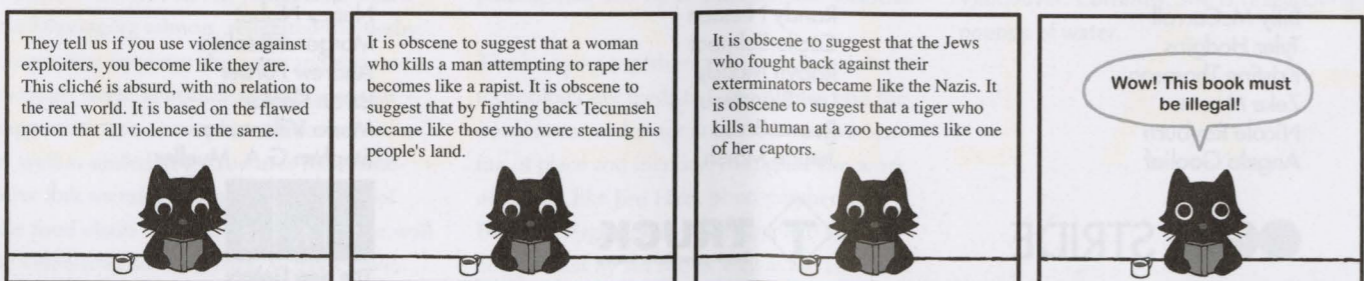
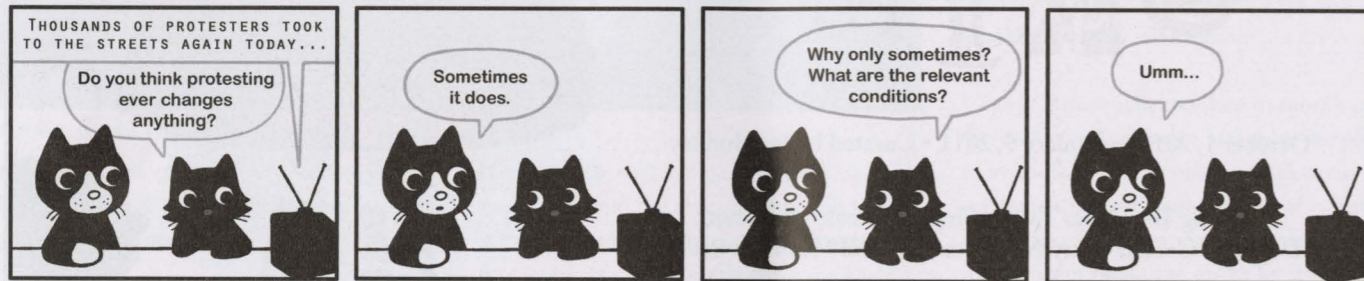
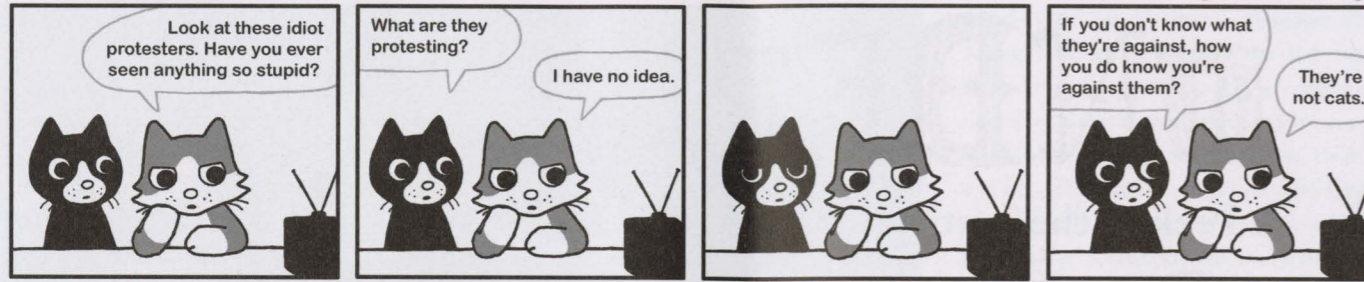
STRIDE
403.262.8507
www.stride.ab.ca

TRUCK
Contemporary Art in Calgary
403.261.7702
www.truck.ca

T N G
The New Gallery
403.233.2399
www.thenewgallery.org

THE PINKY SHOW

by Pinky & Bunny



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from Spirit of the Clear Cut series (detail), 2010

Gerald Hushlak Bred

50 drawings and 8 sculptures
August 6 - October 17, 2010

Two Rivers Gallery
725 Civic Plaza
Prince George, BC, V2L 5T1
Canada
www.tworiversartgallery.com

This fall, PLUG IN ICA will open the doors on a powerfully-inclusive new centre for contemporary art in the heart of Winnipeg.



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