

art media politics

FUSE

ART ≠ MONEY

Culture, cash and the ethics of equilibrium.

Featuring:

Mark V. Campbell, Seth Denizen, Rocky Dobey, John Holden,
Alejandra Labastida and Diana Sherlock

\$7 Volume 31, Number 3



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printed in Canada

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BY ALEJANDRA LABASTIDA



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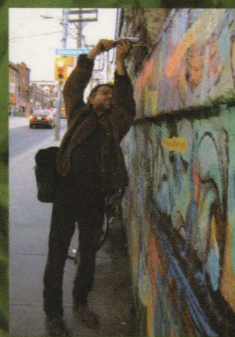
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Cover Photo: Lisa Kannakko, www.lisakannakko.ca

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

Artons Cultural Affairs

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EMAIL: subscriptions@fusemagazine.org

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

Printed in Canada by Sonic Print Management.

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

Publications Mail agreement No. 1396609
Registration No. 8623 / ISSN0838-603X



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CULTURE, CASH AND THE ETHICS OF EQUILIBRIUM

With all of the changes that have happened in our communities in the name of art and under the rubric of creativity in recent years, Fuse has been turning our attention to cities, to publicly-funded culture, the function of creative industries and the shifts in the agendas and interests of funding bodies. These are themes that we continue to address in this issue. Many of us in artist run and arts not-for-profit organizations have for years been struggling with funding cuts and tighter budgets as we see major money makers — from the big banks to real estate developers — profiting off of a “creativity” that prioritizes the link between culture and commerce, investment, instrumentality and return, above all else. Events such as Toronto’s L’oreal Luminato Festival and Scotia Bank Nuit Blanche or Vancouver’s Cultural Olympiad and Calgary’s Stirring Culture, while making a small investment in the arts, reap their primary rewards to business and industry — aestheticizing political and cultural practice and increasingly making the link to commerce. In this context, the question of how we value publicly-funded culture — how we understand culture’s relevance and importance to broader social processes and civil society — becomes increasingly pressing.

This is one of the primary considerations addressed by Calgary-based curator and writer Diana Sherlock in her conversation with the Demos Institute’s John Holden on the valuing of culture in the current neo-liberal political and economic climate. Talking about the importance of public funding, Holden considers the tensions between the instrumental demands of politicians and policy makers and the intrinsic value of culture. Making a case for investment in the arts that does not rely on instrumentalist outcomes, economic impact and creative industries logic, he argues that the real reason governments should invest in culture is because of their democratic mandates — the public wants accessible culture as part of its civil society. Holden insists that we reconsider the language of supplication and dependency used with granting structures in making a case for the value of art. Instead he suggests that we make a

fundamental shift in our way of thinking to regard art and culture as essential to the equilibrium of society. “We should not think of arts and culture as transactional, we should be talking about longer-term iterative relationships.”

Shifting the relationship of artists to the broader society is the subject of Chris Gehman’s shortFuse, where he considers the problematic association of art and virtue. Gehman insists that the implicit recognition of virtue attached to the field of art often takes the place of compensation for work, in lieu of both public recognition and decent income. If, he argues, we struggle in obscurity and relative poverty — as do most artists and other workers in the field — we are consoled by our virtuosity. Understanding this dynamic, he writes, can help us unpack a crucial problem: when governments, foundations, corporations and rich individuals want to make a public display of virtue and generosity, they tend not to donate to living artists.

The complexity and value of community and culture are further taken up by this issue’s two columns. In *A New Spin on MAPL*, Seth Denizen considers the implications of CRTC regulation enforcement on Vancouver’s Co-op radio and the sometimes arbitrary nature of CanCon policies. Denizen argues that the same rules cannot be applied to commercial and community radio, and that CRTC guidelines, in the case of Vancouver co-op radio, actually inhibit the station from fulfilling its mandate of representing the voices and perspectives of its diverse community members. Mark Campbell’s article *A Paradigmatic Poetics of Reading* considers the centering of Blackness and its diverse components in a discussion about Afrodiasporic cultures in Canada. Through his reading of Andrea Fatona’s curated exhibition “Poetics of a Black Diaspora,” Campbell reflects on the historical constraints of colonial geographies and economic systems and proposes conversations “where structures that constrict black life do not become reinscribed.”

— Izida Zorde

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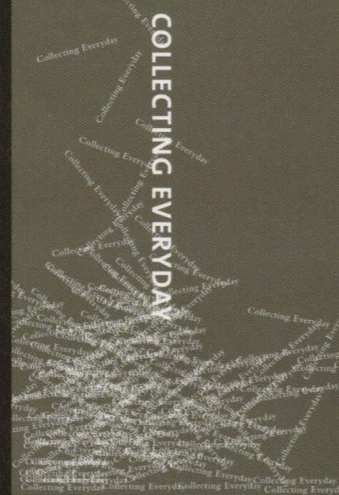
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CO-OP

RADIO:

A New Spin on MAPL **BY Seth Denizen**

The year 2008 has yet to really get going for Vancouver Co-op Radio (CFRO), since they spent the better part of January and February preparing to defend their broadcasting license in front of the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC). The hearing was the result of a CRTC “spot check” in early November 2006, in which the commission found that only 32.8 percent of the general music broadcast at the station qualified as Canadian content (Cancon), instead of the 35 percent required of both community and commercial radio stations. This was the second licensing term in which Co-op Radio was found to be in violation of CRTC rules since 2002, when the station was found to have incomplete log tapes. According to Co-op Radio, however, these violations have more to do with the realities of community broadcasting than with the station’s unwillingness to comply with CRTC regulations.

<from left to right> Close up of the corner of Columbia and Hastings; Vancouver Co-operative Radio, CFRO, 103.7FM; Inside the studio.



Photos: Nathaniel Christopher

One of these realities is having to work on a tiny budget. In 2002, the station was recording its broadcasts on the affordable medium of old VHS tapes in order to comply with CRTC regulations for recordings. When these tapes were submitted, some of them proved inaudible and resulted in a violation. The results of this violation drained station resources even further by increasing the frequency of the costly license renewal process from seven years to four and by requiring the station to purchase new digital archiving equipment. While equipment costs can hurt at a station already operating without the benefit of full-time staff, institutional affiliation or commercial advertising revenue, members say financial autonomy is well worth the price. Listeners in Vancouver agree, as they represent the only major funding source for a station that broadcasts 24 hours a day, seven days a week, with 90 different programs in 13 languages. The reality of working on community support is that the entire station runs on the equivalent of one year’s salary for a CBC executive.

So why does a radio station that is so completely dedicated to local content, in local languages, with local DJ’s, have problems with Cancon? The answer lies in the very content that is considered Canadian. During the week of the spot check, the station had spoken word performances, audio art and DJ mixes that did not qualify as Canadian because the CRTC does not consider any of these art forms music. Cancon requirements can only apply to Category Two, “popular music,” for which 35 percent of musical selections must be Cancon or Category Three, “special interest music” (folk, blues, calypso, etc.).¹ Co-op Radio also has turntablism shows (where a DJ scratches or beat-matches records on a turntable) that were not a part of the spot check, but that the station argued should be considered toward their requirement — the point being, that even if a small percentage of the audio art, spoken word or DJ performances had been recognized by the commission, the station

would have surpassed the 35 percent threshold and passed its inspection. In addition to this, some of the “popular music” that Co-op Radio had classified as Canadian content was considered by the CRTC to be on the boundary and disqualified. In effect, the Cancon shortfall was the result of specific CRTC interpretations of content, rather than rote applications of policy regulations.

Currently the CRTC does not recognize audio art, radio art or turntablism as Cancon under the MAPL system: To qualify as Canadian content, a musical selection must generally fulfill at least two of the following conditions:

- M (MUSIC)** — the music is composed entirely by a Canadian.
- A (ARTIST)** — the music is, or the lyrics are, performed principally by a Canadian.
- P (PRODUCTION)** — the musical selection consists of a live performance that is
 - (i) recorded wholly in Canada, or
 - (ii) performed wholly in Canada and broadcast live in Canada.
- L (LYRICS)** — the lyrics are written entirely by a Canadian.

Encoded in this system, of course, is the underlying assumption that everyone agrees on what “music” is. Since the work of John Cage and other avant-garde sound artists of the 1930s and 1940s, the distinction between sound and music has been widely contested. For turntablism, the case hinges on whether it qualifies as performance (P) according to the CRTC — which it does not. Instead, the CRTC recommends (in Public Notice 2000-13) that both radio art and turntablism be classified according to the “montage” policy, which states that a “montage” is Cancon if at least 50 percent of the constituent sound is Canadian according to the MAPL system.



<left> High Priest hosting the "Level Vibes" show at Vancouver's Co-op Radio.
<top right> Inside the station.
<bottom right> DJ and sound equipment.



Photos: Nathaniel Christopher

In practice, a lot of what gets played on our community radio stations is unclassifiable and unquantifiable by CRTC guidelines, which were not created to deal with non-mainstream genres of music.

These regulations mean that in practice, none of the audio art and turntablism broadcast by a community radio station gets classified as Canadian by the CRTC. Composers and performers have no real incentive to limit themselves in their creative process to satisfy such an arbitrary and irrelevant definition of their work (irrelevant unless you are programming staff at a community radio station, sweating over Cancon requirements).

This has serious implications for a station like Co-op Radio, largely because of how little there is on the grid to fulfill the requirements. Only about 10 percent of Co-op Radio's programming is Category two "popular

music," meaning that the few radio programmers who do fall into this category must be extremely careful that more than one in three (but less than one in four) songs they broadcast can be categorized as Cancon. This is largely because the remaining programming focuses on community-based spoken word content, like the six hours a week of First Nations programming, or Tinig Ng Masa (a show for the Filipino community), Investing in Health (a show by, for and about healthcare workers), From a Whisper to a Song (a show by, for and about Aboriginal people living with drug addiction), America Latina al Dia (a bilingual show about politics in Latin America) or

Stark Raven (a show about the criminal justice system and prisoners). Where there is space on the grid for music, that space is devoted to more marginalized art forms like audio art and spoken word (on shows like Soundscape and Wax Poetic) or DJ mixes and turntablism rather than to the kind of music that would be easily classifiable as Cancon by the CRTC (Celine Dion, anyone?). Ironically, the reason for this can be found in the station's mandate, which conforms to the CRTC definition of community radio. In the words of Programming Director Leela Chinniah, "by our very nature we will always have selections that are hard to classify under the CRTC system and unfortunately we're being penalized for fulfilling our mandate."

For the CRTC to classify sound art as Cancon would require them to acknowledge that Canadian artists are doing a lot more with sound than traditional mainstream music. This is particularly important to

Vancouver's Co-op Radio, which has one of the longest-running sound art residency programs in Canada. The residency receives financial support from The Canada Council for the Arts and commissions works from sound artists to be burned onto CDs and distributed to other stations across Canada. This leaves Co-op Radio in the contradictory position of benefiting from one government agency that seeks to support Canadian artists on the radio, only to be penalized by another for doing so. For Leela Chinniah, the station's support of Canadian sound artists embodies the "spirit of Cancon" if not the letter, which according to the CRTC website is intended to "give voice to Canadians, to their talent and their shared experiences."

Turntablism fares no better than sound art under CRTC regulations. A DJ could scratch the sound completely off a hip hop record but the sound would still belong to the hip hop artist in the eyes of the CRTC.

While the commission acknowledges turntablism as "the use of turntables as musical instruments, essentially to alter and manipulate the sound of recorded music," it does not grant the practice performance status (P) under the MAPL system. While the results of this policy for Co-op Radio in particular have been severe, it is easy to see how the CRTC could have decided that clearly defining turntablism was too daunting a task to take on. Is everyone who plays a vinyl record a turntablist, or is it necessary to use the functions of a turntable that distinguish it from a belt-drive record player? Or are only those who are physically manipulating the record turntablists, and if so, for how long do they have to manipulate or beat-match the record for it to become a performance of turntablism in the eyes of the CRTC? For the National Campus and Community Radio Association (NCRA), the answer is one minute or more. If a DJ stands in a broadcast studio moving a record

back and forth under the needle of a turntable, according to the NCRA's proposed definition, the resulting music becomes hers after one minute. If this sounds like a ridiculous way to understand the diverse and complex cultural production of DJs, that's because it is. While it is difficult enough to agree on a qualitative definition of turntablism, even among turntablists, the process becomes farcical when a quantitative definition is called for. The goals of this process are clear, however, and cast in high relief by Co-op Radio's recent struggle to renew its broadcasting license.

In practice, a lot of what gets played on our community radio stations is unclassifiable and unquantifiable by CRTC guidelines, which were not created to deal with non-mainstream genres of music. While Canadian audio art and turntablism clearly deserve to be recognized as legitimate independent modes of cultural production by industry institutions and granting agencies, this may

not solve fundamental issues for community radio stations. Defining sound art and turntablism for the CRTC would necessarily put arbitrary constraints on forms of cultural production that are constantly evolving, and not even entirely mutually exclusive. Every time a new form of cultural production emerges, the CRTC has to be dragged like a ball and chain behind musical innovators to make sure community radio stations can continue to support them. Let's not forget that turntablism, which has made its way into an incredible diversity of music and fundamentally changed the role of the DJ, has been around for more than a decade and the CRTC is still calling it montage. While it is certainly problematic for the community sector that the CRTC is deciding what is and is not music, the answer should not necessarily be to give the CRTC new rules to enforce. Co-op Radio is not calling for the end to Canadian content regulations in radio broadcasting, but these regulations may need to be rethought where community radio is concerned.

ensure the existence of local programming. This creates a paradoxical situation in which decreasing Canadian content requirements for community radio stations, or even eliminating them altogether, may ensure that more locally produced Canadian content is aired. This may be especially true for community stations like Co-op Radio for which the percentage of Category two, "popular music," is particularly low, and broadcast of music that is commercially successful (such as hits) is discouraged by their programming policy. Space on the grid for music is already necessarily constrained by the station's commitment to empowering a diversity of local voices to speak where the broadcasting industry would otherwise keep them silent. The music that does make it onto the programming grid is more likely to be Category Three, "special interest music," which generally serves the cultural and linguistic needs of specific communities. To require 35 percent of the remaining music to be Cancon is to require 35 percent of programming not to be spoken word poetry, sound art, turntab-

"montage" policy is not replaced with an equally arbitrary system of classification for the diverse cultural production of community radio contributors. This move would mean an acknowledgement by the CRTC that there is a fundamental difference between community and commercial radio, and that this difference is not only written out in CRTC regulations but guarded by a listening community that commercial radio does not have. In addition, it must be recognized that community radio stations increasingly define their community and listenership without regard for the nationalist borders of the Canadian state — addressing the needs of First Nations, immigrant, diasporic, migrant and temporary workers from around the world or old-school funk addicts in Romania (as in the case of WEFUNK on CKUT in Montreal). Allowing community radio volunteers to conceptualize their own understanding of their community and its membership is a fundamental principle of community radio, without which this form of radio could not exist.

Some time this summer, the CRTC will release its report regarding Vancouver Co-op Radio's presentation at the hearings and decide on the length of the upcoming license renewal term. The length of this term is incredibly important, as there are few resources for administering a renewal process that ultimately hinders the important work of community radio. This is perhaps the most compelling reason why we have to be vigilant and critical of the way institutions like the CRTC are shaping our cultural landscape. Community radio stations are crucial and already under too much financial strain. They are too important to be compromised in their programming decisions by the ballast of commercial radio policy. □

SETH DENIZEN is an independent journalist, CKUT DJ, auditory dumpster diver and recent graduate with a degree in Biology. He is currently investigating ways of de-illustrating televised radio broadcasts.

Ultimately, the effect of requiring 35 percent of community broadcasts to reflect industry definitions of music is to marginalize essential forms of expression and the communities from which they come.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s Cancon regulations were created for a commercial radio sector controlled by market forces that were inherently biased against Canadian artists. Not much has changed in this regard today. For many in the community radio sector, however, their local radio stations offer a space to actively contest these market forces. This objective is similarly expressed in the CRTC's updated community radio policy — "The Commission's primary objective for the community radio sector is that it provides a local programming service that differs in style and substance from that provided by commercial stations and the CBC." The problem arises when this mandated local programming is not counted towards Cancon requirements created to

lism or other emerging "boundary" musics like experimental sound collage, which may reflect community voices and needs more accurately. Ultimately, the effect of requiring 35 percent of community broadcasts to reflect industry definitions of music is to marginalize essential forms of expression and the communities from which they come. Restricting the ability of community radio stations to support these voices is not only counterproductive to Cancon objectives; it reinforces existing systemic barriers.

The reduction or elimination of Cancon requirements for community radio stations may be the best way to ensure that the

NOTES:

1. For more detailed definitions of musics belonging to these categories, see Public Notice CRTC 2000-14.



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ON CULTURAL VALUE:
John Holden IN CONVERSATION
WITH Diana Sherlock

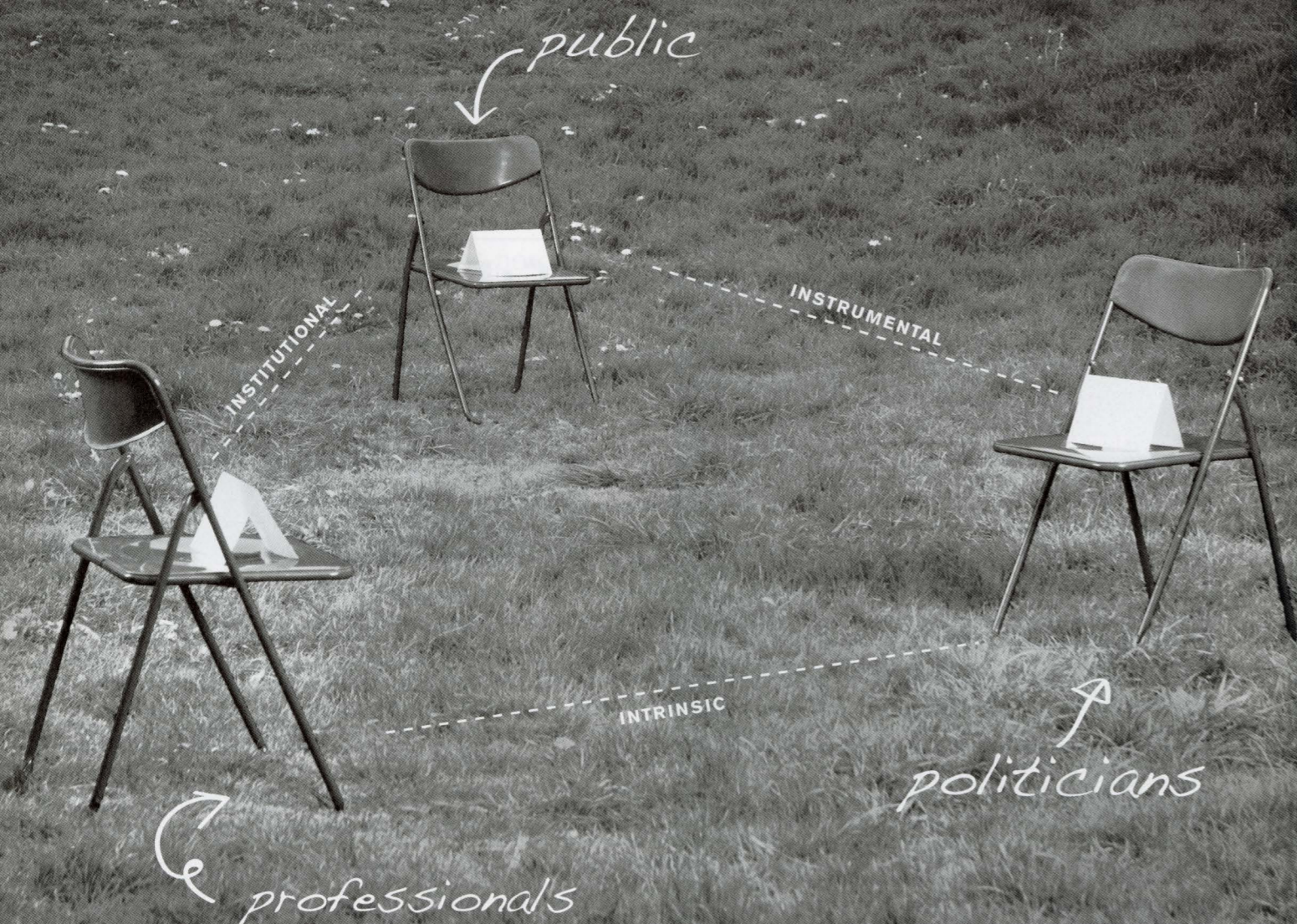


Photo: Lisa Kannakko

In his recent talk for the Calgary Arts Development Authority (CADA, Calgary's civic arts body) at the Glenbow Museum, John Holden recalled his motivations for pursuing his current research into the relationships between culture and politics. Holden embarked upon this research while Board Chair of the Anvil Concert Hall in Hampshire, UK. It was here that his organization was confronted with the dishonesty and disingenuousness of a system that would only fund art if it were known by another name. In one instance, the Anvil's artistic leadership had to choose to either adapt their company's artistic programming to the government's funding mandate — road safety for school children — or decline a grant. Which is what they ultimately did. During the 1990s, such unclear funding objectives coupled with statistically arcane reporting strategies were the norm in the UK and this legacy continues to obscure any clear articulation of the value of arts and culture to society. In search of a more honest and rigorous mandate for publicly-funded arts and culture, Holden, who is now Head of Culture at Demos — a UK think-tank for "everyday democracy" that works with organizations on policy, public service and development — organized a conference called *Valuing Culture* in 2003.

The value of culture cannot be expressed only with statistics. Audience numbers give us a poor picture of how culture enriches us



Capturing Cultural Value

How culture has become a tool of government policy

John Holden

Capturing Cultural Value and other publications by John Holden can be found on: www.demos.co.uk/people/johnholden

Artistic directors, cultural commentators, policy analysts and funders gathered to assess the apparent imbalance between the instrumental needs of funders engaged with the advancement of social policy and the intrinsic value of cultural activity. Since then, Demos has accumulated and presented a steady flow of research into the value of culture, contributing to a broader dialogue about the importance of publicly funded culture.

Two of Holden's essays, *Capturing Cultural Value* (2004) and *Cultural Value and the Crisis of Legitimacy: Why Culture Needs a Democratic Mandate* (2006)¹ provide a conceptual framework for articulating cultural value. This framework is useful for seeing our way clear of policies that privilege instrumental values over those that may be more difficult to assess. Holden's Canadian tour, which in addition to Calgary included stops at arts development organizations in Edmonton, Banff, Toronto and Ottawa, was timely in light of the widespread hype about "creative city" models, public-private partnerships and the powerful global art market. Within this climate, definitions of cultural value are increasingly equated with economic impact using a "creative industries" logic. Calgary, like many Canadian cities, is currently awash in "creative cities" rhetoric, but CADA's invitation to Holden reflects an awareness of the need to complicate the debate and articulate a case for investment in the arts that does not rely on the usual instrumental arguments. In his writings, Holden asserts that the instrumentalization of culture marks the end of public funding and will lead in short court to the corporatization of culture. As evidenced by the Anvil example, such instrumentalization results in a bureaucratization that is alienating to both artists and the public, distorting the work of artists for political means. Holden argues for a rebalancing of the instrumental, intrinsic and institutional values of culture in order to develop a more self-determined and sustainable cultural ecosystem.

CULTURAL VALUE

Diana Sherlock: Since we will be using the term "culture" throughout this discussion, perhaps we can start by outlining the difficulties inherent in defining the term. How do you understand culture within this framework and how does the ambiguity of the term affect the way policy decisions are structured?

John Holden: Cultural historian Raymond Williams calls it one of the three or four most difficult words in the English language to define. "Culture" is used in two main senses. One is an ethnographic sense, all the practices and symbols that go into making the meaning of a society. Everything that we do is cultural in this sense. In my writings, I have been concentrating more on the second definition, what in everyday parlance we think of as funded culture: libraries, museums, heritage sites, archives, performing arts, visual arts. Historically, in the way that governments funded culture after the Second World War, culture was treated as leisure and recreation



John Holden, part of Edmonton Cultural Capital Program: Speakers Series. January 22, 2008. Conference Theatre at MacEwan College, downtown campus. Photo: Chalifoux-Procktor Photography. Courtesy: Edmonton Cultural Capital Program.

— you can see this quite clearly in the way that some local governments call their arts departments "recreation and leisure." You can also see it, for example, in John Maynard Keynes' broadcast in 1946 that set up the Arts Council of Great Britain when he talked about ACGB being about enjoyment and merriment. But the implication of being a mere leisure activity is that culture became something that was affordable once governments had paid for all the other stuff. So it was thought of as peripheral and marginal to what government should spend money on.

I think this has been changing for a number of reasons. Culture is much more central to the way we identify ourselves now. We don't just identify ourselves through work, but also through our relationships to cultural production and consumption — what we read, listen to, choose to watch, etc. It is clearly more central in terms of economic activity than it was. It's even central to international relations in terms of how we understand each other. We are all travelling much more, on the web much more, we have more access to peer-to-peer contact. There are millions of tourists travelling the globe and many of them visit cultural sites or go to see objects relating to their own cultures. This means that, for example, the way that an institution like the Musée du Quai Branly in Paris displays

and interprets its collections and the impression that the museum's activities leave with visitors, have an effect on France's licence to operate on the world stage. Culture has integrated with the rest of policy and politics as a result of globalization and economic forces in the very recent past and you can see this in the growth of the creative economy and in the explosion of democratic cultural production on YouTube, for example. Individual experiences of culture are also changing in interesting ways. I think we went through a really weird blip during the age of mass entertainment, film and TV where we became fairly passive consumers of culture and accepted what we were given. Now we are, to a much greater degree, back to creating our own culture — just look at the boom in sales for musical instruments and digital cameras. Every 20-year-old I know plays in a band. Many 20-year-olds I know write poetry. They're all uploading stuff to YouTube and MySpace. You can see this as a revisitation of the way we were in the 19th century and before, when we were making our own entertainment around the piano or in the church choir. The current practice goes deeper to express who we are through culture, making culture more important to contemporary society.



...cultural professionals have had to talk to politicians primarily in instrumental terms, which has led to a lack of understanding. Cultural professionals often don't understand why they are being asked to account for what they do in the language of instrumentality that politics demands. So you have a very dysfunctional conversation going on, which the public is left out of.

DS: Can you discuss the model of cultural value that you developed in *Capturing Cultural Value* and why you chose to do this research?

JH: I think of the arts and culture as being subject to a mixture of values that represent different ways of looking at what is going on in a cultural encounter. It is equally valid to talk in three different languages about three values and not to make them oppositional. These include *intrinsic value* — the intangible value of the emotive form — the *instrumental value* of culture in its ability to achieve other social and economic goals and its *institutional value* as a site of public engagement and societal formation. Intrinsic value is a category that needs to be talked about, but there are problems in dealing with it. It is both difficult to measure and seen by many as self-indulgent or elitist. Because of this, intrinsic value dropped off the policy table in the UK a few years ago. It wasn't part of the way the arts were accounted for. Granting structures became overwhelmingly concerned with instrumental values, results that used culture but could have been achieved by other means. So health outcomes, community building, education, crime reduction, all of these kinds of things, which again I find perfectly valid, but also very difficult to measure.

DS: But instrumental value gives a sense that it can be measured and this is driving a lot of policy.

JH: It creates a tendency to micromanage because government wants accountability and can be prescriptive. This has been seen in some writings as a binary opposition: you either have one, intrinsic value, or the other, instrumental value. I don't think you have to look at it in oppositional terms. Depending on what you're doing and the context, both can be equally valid. So to get out of this strict binary, I developed a third point of triangulation: institutional value. Arts and culture have a privileged place amongst the range of services that are publicly funded. With most public services, people *have to* engage with them; it's either obligatory or required by circumstance. You *have to* send your children to school, you *have to* obey a summons if you're caught speeding, you *have to* go to the doctor if you break your leg. But when you engage with culture, you're doing it because you want to. When you go to a theatre or a museum, it's an act of volition. That has really interesting implications for cultural organizations, because it means that the way they go about what they do can increase or decrease people's sense of being in a society, in a community. Culture creates a convivial space. It is also different from other public services in that other services are delivered. You deliver a set curriculum; you deliver health care, etc. A cultural encounter is also what you bring to it, so in a sense we as individuals and as citizens are creating culture with cultural organizations. You therefore can't simply deliver culture and you can't simply privatize culture the way you can privatize other services. Community building, sense of citizenship, all that stuff that lies within institutional value, seems to me to be a really interesting area for politics to think about.

DS: In your model of cultural value, this first triad of intrinsic, instrumental and institutional value is overlaid with another triad: public, politicians and professionals. How do these intersect and what potential relationships are formed?

JH: All three of these groups have interests in all three values, but each group identifies most strongly with a different node. Cultural professionals must identify with intrinsic value: why else would they be working in the sector? The public also cares primarily about intrinsic value. You or I go to a show for whatever we think we are going to get out of it on an individual basis. Politicians are interested in mass social outcomes, which is why politics is, as the evidence suggests, primarily concerned with instrumental values, with getting measured, predictable results from its investment. As a result of this disjuncture, cultural professionals have had to talk to politicians primarily in instrumental terms, which has led to a lack of understanding. Cultural professionals often don't understand why they are being asked to account for what they do in the language of instrumentality that politics demands. So you have a very dysfunctional conversation happening, which the public is left out of. I suggest that the real reason public funding should be devoted to culture is because the public itself wants that. Government spending needs to have that democratic mandate from the public. If cultural professionals engage in a much richer conversation with their publics, they could earn that mandate, which could then give the politicians the validation they need from voters to spend their money on culture. By this, I don't mean we should have a culture by plebiscite. This is a dialogue, an integrated process, not simply the public saying what cultural professionals should be doing. The idea of a dialogue and a conversation implies give-and-take, learning from each other, and a developmental process. Obviously the capacities and contexts for dialogue are different depending on specific circumstances, but this is a conversation in which each of us must play a part if publicly funded culture is to have a democratic mandate from the public.

DS: You are advocating for a clearer conversation between politicians, art professionals and the public, but doesn't this require trust, a trust that is for the most part lacking?

JH: Politics always seem to have a very ambivalent relationship to culture. On the one hand, politics likes to keep the arts at arm's length, so when artists do highly oppositional or critical work, politicians can distance themselves from it. However, politics always has this wish to control how its money is spent and of course there is legitimacy in having accountability for the expenditure of public money. So the arts are always pulled in two directions. For the public, culture is a very individual occupation, but politics is essentially interested in mass social outcomes and predictability. So there is a philosophical conundrum at the heart of that relationship.

DS: Your model also relies on the power and agency of democracy. How does this function when we have fewer and fewer people

participating in representative democracy and corporations have more power than governments, but no accountability?

JH: Democracy isn't just about the ballot box. It's about our ability to control our individual lives beyond individual consumer choices. Democracy means integrating our autonomy with our standing as citizens in a society. So for me, when cultural organizations and funders start having better conversations with the public, that in itself is an example of democracy. I also think that the idea that governments are powerless in the face of global corporate structures is overdone. As recent developments in the global financial markets show, ultimately, all those huge banks and corporations come running to the public sector to sort out their problems. Governments stand behind the entire system, and they can and still do make laws and regulate. Perhaps the real problem is the gap between governments and people. When governments act to undermine people's trust, as was the case with their false claims prior to the invasion of Iraq, they decrease their own legitimacy and power. This decreased legitimacy naturally flows to other parts of civil society.

TOWARDS A MORE EQUITABLE LANGUAGE

DS: In a lot of your writing you analyze the language that we use to describe culture. In *Creating Cultural Value*, you say that we use the "language of supplication and dependency that fosters relations of inequality." Can you talk a little bit about this statement and address how we might shift our language to one that is more positive or proactive, and what effect that might have on how culture is valued and how policy is written?

JH: Yes, we really do use a language of dependency in culture in all kinds of ways. We seem to conspire to our own submission. We talk about the right to fail with regard to the market and about being not-for-profit, but we are hugely profitable. We discuss anecdotes where business schools talk about case studies, when there is in fact very little difference between the two. We submit grant applications to get subsidy, but farmers get top-up payments. We need to develop a self-confident language, a language of equals. We can also usefully look at language used in other disciplines to talk about some of what we do. A lot of the language of ecology and environmentalism is relevant to culture. The language of the precautionary principle, for example, that we should take special care of tangible and intangible assets that are rare or endangered; the notion of intergenerational equity, that we should pass on something richer than we inherited; and the word "ecology" itself, embodying the idea that every part of a system is as important as every other.

I find language fascinating, and a lot of the words we use in culture are very difficult. "Culture" and "creativity" for starters, but we also use words like "innovation" and "risk" without much agreement about what they mean. So, when we are trying to account for

culture, we have a double difficulty. The data is difficult — for example, economic impact studies are notoriously imprecise — and the language through which we interpret the data is difficult, because a lot of the terms that we use like “culture,” “creativity,” “quality,” “innovation,” are equally imprecise.

DS: Much of the language you seem to propose has less to do with an end product or deliverable but is instead really process-oriented. So talking about relationships and dialogue and encounters, interactions, terms that have defined artist-run culture for decades.

JH: Absolutely right. I don't think we should think of the arts and culture as transactional, which we often do. You know, you sell somebody a ticket and they come to a performance and that is a transaction. Really, we should be talking about longer-term relationships. Interactive relationships where we learn from people and they learn from us.

DS: The term “investment” is being used a lot now. This could be seen as a positive shift away from the term “granting,” which implies a very unequal power relation. But doesn't the definition of “investment” need to be made more complex by taking into account the range of cultural values you address?

JH: Yes, it does. It's a move in the right direction, but there is an element of expectation of a financial transaction, with a financial return, which is somehow embedded there. So I am not quite sure what the right word is for thinking about an investment that has a different set of dividends.

FROM COUNCIL TO AGENCY

DS: The Calgary Arts Development Authority, which was established in 2005, is in the process of developing an organizational model that differs slightly from other arts council models that exist in Canada. One of the main differences is that CADA has an arts development mandate instead of an arts funding mandate. Already this has resulted in them spearheading programs to develop arts spaces and heighten public awareness of the arts in Calgary. How might CADA's model provide options for culture and cultural producers other than those we traditionally see at arts councils whose primary function is to grant funds?

JH: I think it is a really good model, and it's something I would like us to move toward in the UK. In the UK the Arts Council is essentially a grant-giving body. In contrast to that we have regional screen agencies that are involved with moving images and film. They are agencies not councils and there is a very big difference in those two words. An agency model enables people to create networks, to stimulate activity, to bring people together, to make suggestions about what should be done, to commission work *as well as* providing grants to people. This is a useful model because the arts need to be very connected to issues of education, community

and social justice. And it is much easier, in a way, for an agency to operate in that type of connective model than it is for a grant-giving council to operate in that way.

If you look historically, we had this idea that publicly funded culture was basically founded on the basis of market failure. And then you had commercial culture, and those two riff off each other, and artists would move back and forth between them, but they were pretty separate spheres. But now, because of the web and because of the way the arts have changed to become more community-focused, you have this space of social production. So I know a young band that has to navigate between these three spheres. What do they put free on the web, what do they put out commercially with the record company and how? And then they play venues that are often publicly funded spaces. So they are not purely in the commercial sphere like they would have been; they are now riffing off all these things, which are intermingling. This is not an easy thing to get your head around if you are a traditional funder. I mean, where do you put your money? Should some of it actually be going to the commercial sector when that is acting more as a focus of social production? It's getting quite complicated and interesting.

DS: I have a couple of questions about the status of the artist. In Canada, artists also participate in a mixed economy. We have a pretty strong system of public funding for the arts. We have a strong network of organizations across the country, many of which are artist-driven, particularly in the media and visual arts. The federal Status of the Artist Act of 1992 inscribed into law the professional status of the artist. But even given all this, artists are still poor. How do your ideas about cultural value address this problem?

JH: We have exactly the same problem in the UK; if you look at artists' salaries, they are very low. You have a parallel problem in lots of organizations, where, for people to establish their careers, they have to work for nothing as interns, which inevitably means you can't have a diverse range of people in terms of backgrounds going into the sector. So it is a really difficult structural issue. It is not helped by the invisibility of artists in the economic world. Amazingly, in the UK, individual artists do not fall within the creative industries, because they don't fall into a statistical classification where they can be counted. Proxy measures (artwork sales, exhibitions, etc.) are imprecise and statistics concentrate on the industry, not the creative part of “creative industries.” “Artist” is also a self-defining term and lots of people mix their artistic practice with other things. So there is a real problem with visibility. There are so many questions. This needs a lot more work.

DS: It seems to me your research may hold a lot of potential to help the artistic community to address this issue of invisibility. In *Capturing Cultural Value*, for example, you clearly articulate how and why various constituents value culture, and this understanding of how the arts mesh with the rest of society could foster greater respect for artists' work, which currently seems to be lacking.

JH: Well, is that really true any more? Now, we have this incredible global star system with artists making enormous amounts of money once they get into the commercial world. But yes, the celebrity system is only for a few well-known artists, be they YBAs, or US, Chinese, Russian or European examples.

DS: Yes, it is a very finite echelon. It is interesting to consider the effects of having so much media attention around a few art stars. While raising the visibility of the arts, it has also created a very skewed public perception of what an artist is and what their economic realities are. If you look at something like the PBS *Art:21* series, which is educational in its intent, the economic status of the type of artist who is represented (Matthew Barney, Louise Bourgeois, Cai Guo-Qiang) is homogeneous, but not typical. Related to this is the idea of the trickle-down effect in Alberta. The assumption nationally, if not locally, is that somehow the cultural community and individual artists are benefiting from the economic spin-off created by the current oil boom. They might be, to a certain degree, in terms of the commercial market, but for the most part cost-of-living increases far outpace any economic return for cultural producers. In this context, where people are less interested in building communities and more interested in taking their money and running, what kind of potential do you see for building relationships between business and the arts that could lead to a more equitable and sustainable partnership not relegated to a temporary trickle-down effect?

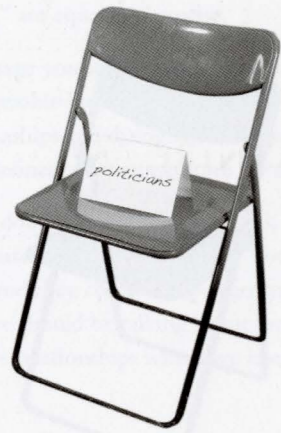
JH: I see business as a player in society. It's not just there to make money; that's only one of its jobs. But if you are creating a young society, which I think is happening in Calgary, then you're trying to create places that are going to attract people to make a life, not just make a living. So businesses have a responsibility to their communities and work in partnership with politics to create places that are good for people to live in.

DS: My sense is that here you share some ground with Richard Florida, but his definition of culture and creativity is much broader than yours. His analysis also seems to promote the further instrumentalization of culture and creativity, situating creativity as a main economic driver, while your model makes a case for arts investment without privileging instrumental arguments like economic impact.

JH: I would love to get into this, but it's a huge area and I can't do it justice here. Basically, I agree with a lot of Florida's analysis, but I share concerns that his analysis is too economically focused (he is an economist, after all). If I understand Florida correctly, his rationale is basically business-led, i.e., the arts attract business to places. Mine is that the arts are part of civil society and make life richer, not just by acting as an attractor of business. Arts and culture are definitely part of that, part of a rich civic life. I think that business, at least where I come from, doesn't have a very sophisticated understanding of what that means. Business thinks in terms of sponsorship of productions, sponsorship of education. I don't think business thinks very much about what the real estate market is doing to the cost of artists'



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studios, and business does need to step up to the table and take some responsibility for that. Because, after all, business attains huge financial benefits from the existence of those kinds of facilities and from the public infrastructure that goes in. One of the main reasons people want to come live in a city is because it is an attractive place to live in terms of what you can do. It is the job of people working in the arts in partnership with those working in politics to make this happen. I think the most vibrant places in the world are where the making of money is going hand-in-hand with the making of meaning. If you just have the making of money, you end up with a very sterile place.

DS: In terms of building diversity in our communities, how does your idea of cultural value compare to Florida's creative city model, which has been criticized for being exclusive and for encouraging gentrification? If you look at London or New York, for example, these are great cultural centres that have become economically exclusive and therefore increasingly homogenous.

JH: Florida does acknowledge that there is a dark side to the idea of the creative class and the creative industries — that those who are not part of it get left behind and the gap between rich and poor gets ever wider. A crucial question for culture is who gets to tell the story, who gets to determine the city's identity. The creative city, for example, is not just about artists and galleries. A truly creative city should allow all of its people to express their cultures. Culture per se is neutral here, a bit like money. Depending on how you treat it, it can become a way of excluding or a way of including people in cities and in society. When cities shift into being homogenous and having settled meaning, they lose their creativity, however rich their culture may be. What I mean by that is that I wouldn't class Kyoto or Florence as a creative city because, although they are full of great historic art, their meaning is settled. Creative cities are places like Istanbul where cultures rub up against each other, creating new meanings. □

DIANA SHERLOCK is a Calgary-based independent curator and visual arts writer.

Notes:

1. www.demos.co.uk/people/johnholden

SOUTH ASIAN VISUAL ARTS CENTRE
SAVAC **ALTERNATOR**
 gallery for contemporary art

SAVAC, SOUTH ASIAN VISUAL ARTS CENTRE, AND
 THE ALTERNATOR GALLERY FOR CONTEMPORARY ART
 ARE DELIGHTED TO CO-PRESENT A COLLABORATIVE PROJECT
 BETWEEN ARTISTS JAYCE SALLOUM AND KHADIM ALI:

دل که سوز ندارد، دل نیست

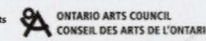
(The heart that has no love/pain/generosity is not a heart.)

Alternator Gallery for Contemporary Art

June 9th to July 31st, 2008

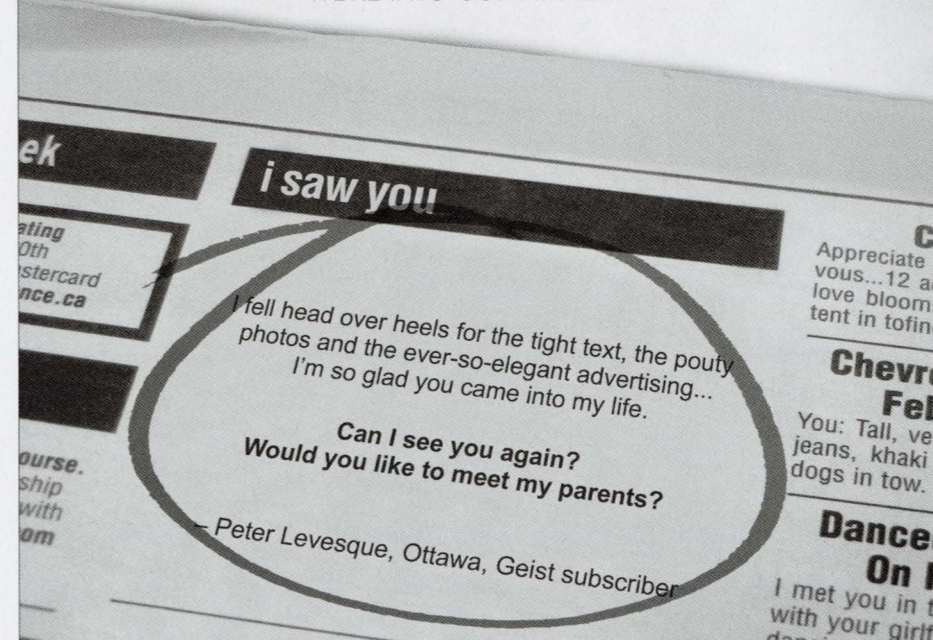
103 - 421 Cawston Ave, Kelowna, B.C.

Edges of Diversity was commissioned by the Alternator Gallery with assistance from Arts Partners in Creative Development and the Audain Foundation. The heart that has no love/pain/generosity is not a heart is a co-presentation between SAVAC and Alternator Gallery as part of the Edges of Diversity Commission.



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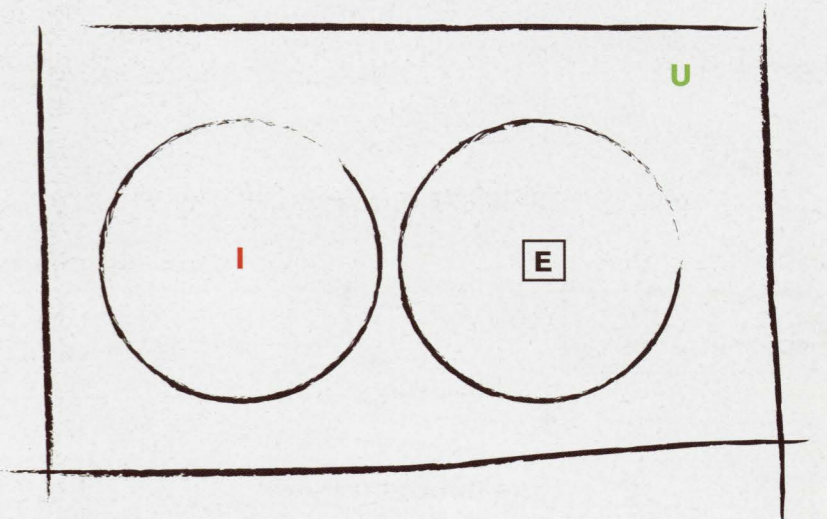
GEIST
 IDEAS AND CULTURE
 MADE IN CANADA

1. I end .33
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Given a set **U**

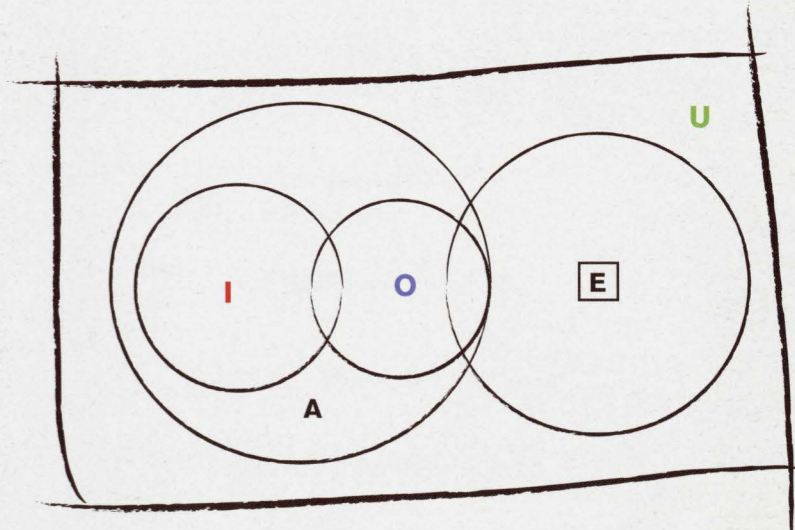
Given a set **U**=human beings, then we ask: is it possible to abstract a subset of **U** in the realm of tolerance? We find that there is not (as there has never been) an abyss so real between human beings as to create a division in **U** with one exception, which is defined as follows:

- U** = human beings
- I** = the sick
- E** = the healthy



Given that the essence of the distance is visual as opposed to physic (the experience of a glance) not all elements of **U** know about it. **I** is well aware of it while the elements of **E** could not possibly know about it unless they once belonged to **I**, in which case it is inevitable to add a new factor to the equation (as in almost all of the **U** affairs) = time. Then the following holds:

- A** = those who know
- O** = the crusaders
- $A = (I \cup O; p(O \cap I))$
- $O = (I \cap E; (x \in I \wedge x \notin I))$



Two sets are the same if and only if they have the same elements. The axiom of extensionality is the idea of the Other.¹

Set Theory Notation:

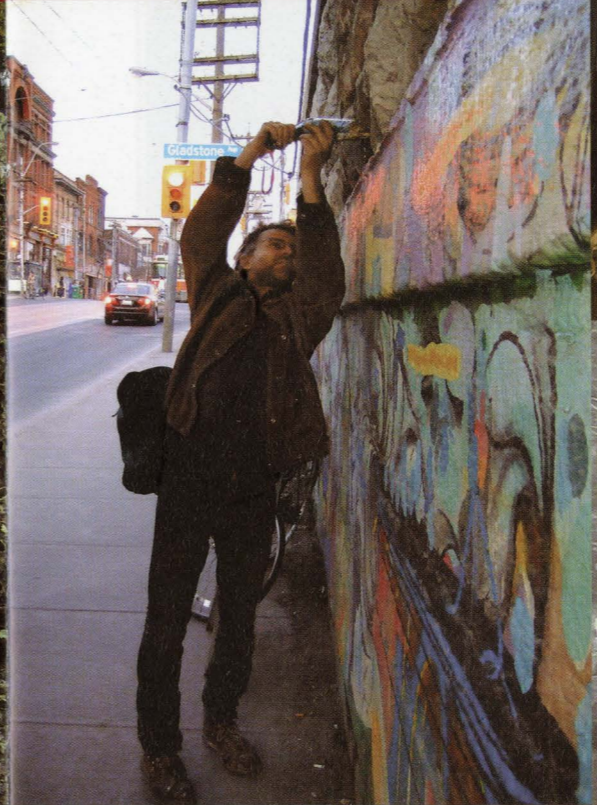
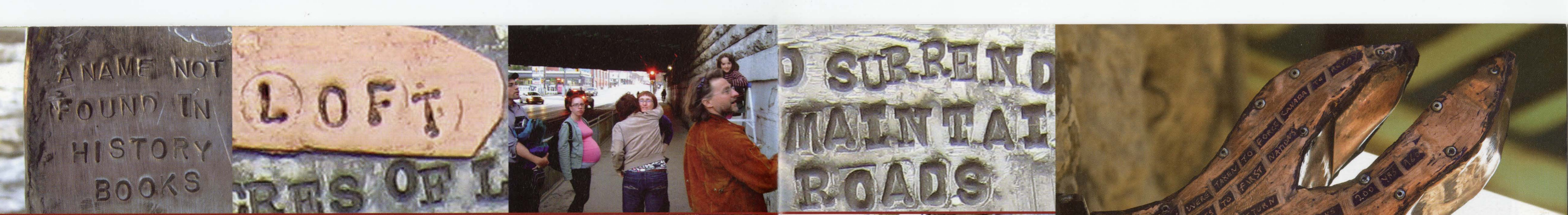
- U** = universal set
- ∈** = belongs
- ∉** = doesn't belong

$A \cap B$ = the intersection of **A** and **B** is the set of all objects which are both in **A** and **B**

$A \cup B$ = the elements that belong to **A** or **B** or to both **A** and **B** form a new set called the union of **A** and **B**

$A = \{x: p(x)\} = A$ is the set of elements **x** that holds **p(x)**

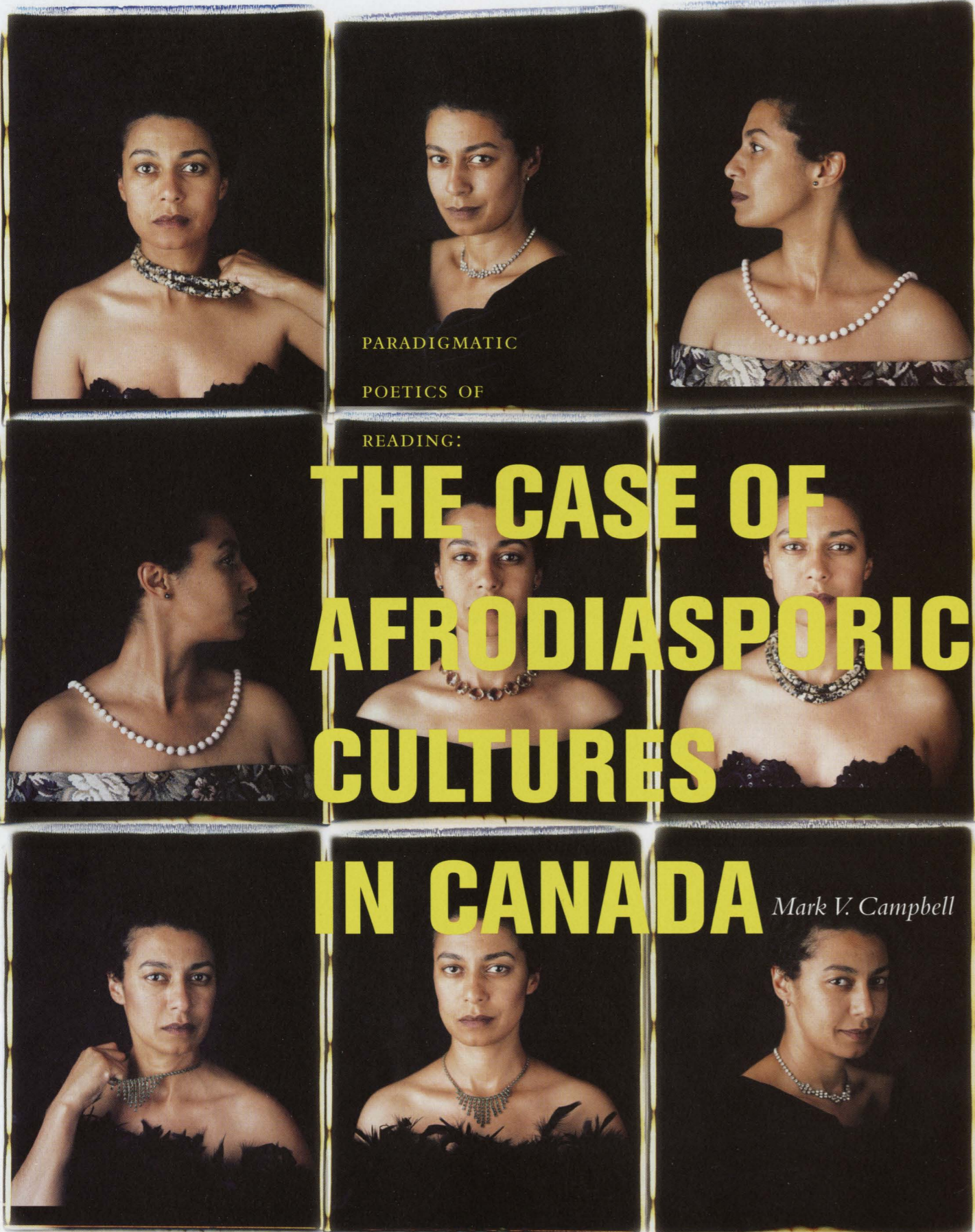
1. Badiou, Alain. "El ser y el acontecimiento", Argentina, Ed. Mananatial, p.29
 *Cromophore based in Arthur Rimbaud's poem "Voyelles"



rocky dobye
sarah j vance
location: CN Rail Line, Toronto
photos: david owen / kat o'neil
graphic design: LOPEZ design



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200 YEARS OF LAND STRUGGLES FROM 1820~2008



PARADIGMATIC
POETICS OF

READING:

**THE CASE OF
AFRODIASPORIC
CULTURES
IN CANADA**

Mark V. Campbell

Maud Sulter. *Les Bijoux I-IX*, 2002. Courtesy: Thames Art Gallery.

Blackness in Canada has, for the past four centuries, been imagined and reproduced in dominant discourse as a coherent homogenous group. Many observers, authors and historians have failed to notice that exiled Jamaican Maroons in Nova Scotia were not the same as Black Loyalists, or that “Afro-Caribbean” and “African-American” were not synonymous in Toronto at the turn of the 20th century. To centre the African Diaspora in Canada is to engage spatial and ideological struggle around what it might mean to be Canadian- and African-descended.

Reading the Image: Poetics of the Black Diaspora is a cross-Canada exhibition that showcases the breadth and diversity of works from locations in the African Diaspora. Curated by Andrea Fatona with assistance from Deanna Bowen, this exhibition is a didactic conversation that creates dialogue around issues that Canadian institutions have failed to progressively address, specifically Blackness and its diverse components. At stake in the possibility of such a discussion is the myriad of rhetoric that tries to distinguish Canada from its Southern neighbour. An articulated diversity within the category “Black Canadian,” holds the potential to disrupt the idea of a homogenous body of people saved by America’s British neighbours to the North.

Fatona’s exhibition criss-crosses the country to both converse with spaces of Black presence hundreds of years old and enter spaces where Blackness is imagined not to exist. The exhibit opened at the Thames Art Gallery in Chatham, Ontario, an important terminus of the Underground Railroad and settlement of free Black populations. It moved next to Halifax, Nova Scotia, another historic location of Black Canadians inscribed with centuries of diverse populations from Jamaica, America’s 13 colonies, Grenada, Barbados and Sierra Leone returnees. The Robert McLaughlin Gallery in Oshawa, Ontario became the next stop of the tour, followed by an opening in Sherbrooke, Quebec. The Yukon Arts Centre in Whitehorse will round out the national movements of the exhibition in the summer of 2008. This final location is noteworthy, an action that speaks back to section 38 of Canada’s 1910 Immigration Policy, which detailed certain populations as “unsuited” for climes of the North. In fact, had the Laurier government been re-elected in 1911, its proposed prohibition of the entrance of Black people into Canada might have made Fatona’s exhibit impossible and this review unimaginable.

Given such a context, *Reading the Image* is a challenge to audiences to develop new reading practices that situate Black diasporic

individuals as central rather than peripheral and as agents rather than subjects. This re-reading of our contemporary moment presents a litany of diasporic utterances that clearly demarcate the boundaries of nation as permeable while centering Black diasporic subjectivity.

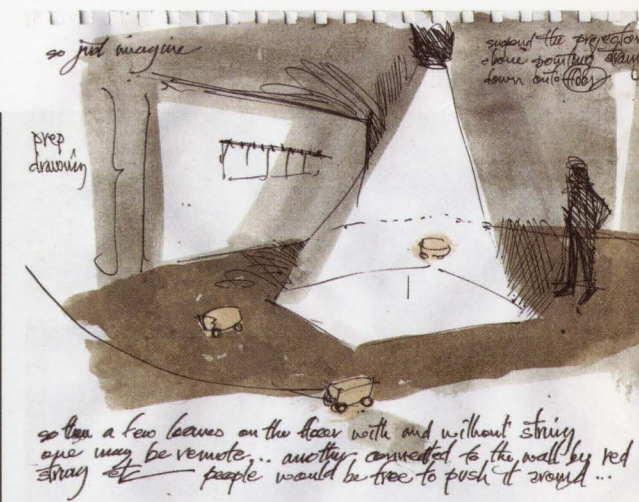
With pieces from Trinidadian Christopher Cozier, Scotland’s Maud Sulter and Canadians Deanna Bowen and Michael Fernandes, Fatona facilitates a “Black transnational dialogue” interested in articulating the “décalage” of the Black diaspora. This dialogue is as much about space and spatial practices as it is about representation. For example, Cozier’s *Once you Have Bread and Wheels You Good to Go* (2006) speaks to the ways in which the Trinidadian economy is overdetermined by its geopolitical positioning in the Caribbean basin, so that capitalism becomes the only available path of “development” in a post-Maurice Bishop Caribbean. Cozier intervenes in what has become the most normalized way of addressing the nefarious mobility of money under the rubric of “development” in a globalized world.

From critiques of capital to the silence of fear that Michael Fernandes captures in his blackboard installation, Fatona’s curatorial strategy disturbs our normative understandings of the processes and realities that circumscribe rather than overdetermine our current existence. Themes such as hybridity, fear, capital and patriarchy intersect each of these pieces and connect the artists’ works to some of the larger discursive frames within which the complexities of Afrodiasporic life lay. Importantly, the works do not simply disrupt a carefully constructed social reality; they are pieces that utilize the Black Diaspora as a resource to propose alternative readings of our contemporary social moment. They are bound neither to a static rendition of blackness nor to a specific geography. Rather, what the works of Cozier, Bowen, Fernandes and Sulter present are expressions whose disruptive power lies in a poetics¹ that refuses to negate itself along the lines of our dominant regime of Western thought.



<left> Reading the Image:
Poetics of the Black Diaspora.
Photo: François Lafrance.
Courtesy: Foreman Art Gallery.

<right> Christopher Cozier.
Once You Have Bread and Wheels
You Good To Go, 2006.
Courtesy: Thames Art Gallery.



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Martiniquian poet and philosopher Édouard Glissant's notion of a "Poetics of Relation" opens up a space for reconsidering "Black" art in relation to other kinds of readings through an understanding of the always-implicated Other. In Canada, the Other is the non-French or non-British Canadian, the one who sits outside the language of "two solitudes" but who, at this moment of exclusion, makes possible the very language of these solitudes and enables a policy of multiculturalism. Poetics, here, refers not only to a form of enunciation but to a counter-hegemonic act of representation interested in freeing us from the control of Western notions of seeing and knowing, as actions indebted to the eye and the rational subject, respectively.

Michael Fernandes' *Room of Fears* (2006) is a pedagogical piece that gestures at the relationship between anonymity, fear and learning. In a participatory call-and-response fashion, Fernandes gathers people's emailed articulations of their fears and inscribes them

on three rectangular blackboards that form an enclosed box-like space. *Room of Fears* surrounds its viewer in perfectly neat cursive handwriting, reminiscent of a third-grade schoolteacher, which haunts with a reality that rests silently within our subconscious. The piece elucidates the relationships between human emotion and pedagogic practice, presenting its audience with a didactic rendering of our earliest formal practices of reading, and considering the very source of what motivates people to inscribe their fears on others. Fernandes' piece positions its viewer to consider how fear and its reproduction allow for the internal festering of unwarranted assumptions that structure individual and social actions. An individual's conduct is dually related to her internalized fears and pleasures combined with what is allowable in a given society. Just as the desire for pleasure induces people to act in a certain way, fear also contributes to an individual's conduct. The internalized and subconscious fear of the Black African has significantly structured the making of the Western world.

For example, we need look no further than the blackface portrayal of African-American men by white actors in D.W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* (1915). In this film, white women are portrayed as victims of predatory black(faced) men. The patriarchal fear of emasculation through the rape of one's "female property" is inscribed on the body of Black men. Such a film demonstrates how fear (however ill-informed) makes certain kinds of actions possible; unfortunately, these fears led to a massive number of lynchings of young Black men.

A surface reading of *Room of Fears* offers no easy or obvious relationship to Black Diasporic culture. If we recall that learning to read was a contraband activity for Black people in the Southern United States and bring this into conversation with the alarming rates at which Black students are pushed-out² of the schools, a picture of the connection between power and schooling becomes clear. Undoubtedly, the body is at the centre of this piece, a Black body that structures

other meaning-making activities, especially fear-driven action such as the discriminatory Zero Tolerance policies that have violated the human rights of many black students. It is precisely this, the unspoken fear, fear of the Other, fear of the Black body, upon which white fears and whiteness are inscribed. From D.W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* to Toronto District School Board's Zero Tolerance Policy and Safe Schools Act, Blackness especially that of black males has become the body upon which (dis)ursive writings of fear have traditionally taken place. Taken together, the hundreds of fears that comprise Fernandes' project facilitate an entrance into a crushing anxiety-filled space, decorated with fears written in white chalk on a black surface; fears that offer no escape, that are cursively inscribed with a frightening precision (rather than accuracy).

Rather than focusing on our internalized fears and subconscious, Christopher Cozier's work targets an externalized, manufactured component of the western subject: the

consumer. Cozier's project *Available in All Leading Stores* (2006) consists of ink, a rubber stamp and foldable cardboard boxes. Cozier invites his audience to fold a cube-shaped box and use the stamp to designate the box as a commodity with a huge capitalized bolded title: FEAR. As the rubber-stamped labels evidence the commodity's "made in the USA" origins, *Available in All Leading Stores* illuminates the connections between manufactured fear and capital's expansion. Trinidad burgeoning oil economy, alongside the criminal phenomenon of kidnapping, makes "fear" a central component of the country's drive towards capitalist expansion. Personal security companies and ransom monies are but two small instances where the increased circulation of capital rears its ugly head cloaked in shadowy mask of fear. Post-9/11 anti-terrorist activity largely instigated by the United States has not ignored the Muslim Trinidadian, as the reach of America's bloodied disaster-capitalism-soaked tentacles enter the Caribbean basin to make Muslim Trinidadians a target (even

Reading the Image presents us with a way of reading that centres Black folk not only as objects of the Western gaze but also as practitioners of a politics of representation that is inclusive of the diversity within the category, "Black."

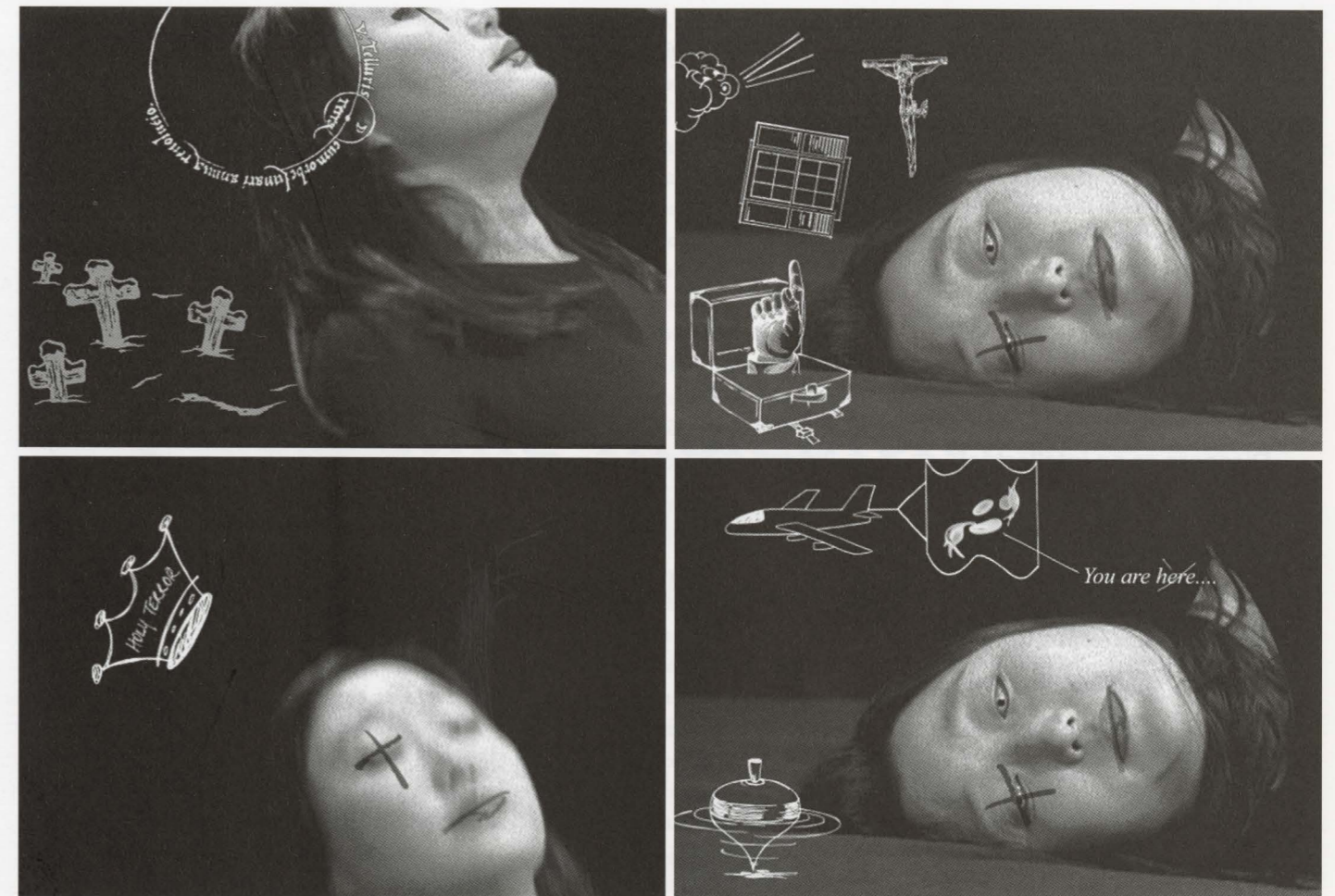
when they are in the diaspora). Crozier piece allows for its audience to assemble a portable, and possibly saleable, cardboard box of fear, 30 ounces in weight. Small, light and moveable, these 7.5 cm² boxes, whose origin and quantity is determined by the audience, appear to be an invitation to become agents who can negotiate (or trade) fear for something other than victimhood. As a participatory piece, *Available in All Leading Stores* refuses to let us off the hook for our implication in the processes that sometimes make our lives and the lives of others unlivable.

Continuing with his interrogation of capitalist expansion, the multimedia installation *Once You Have Bread and Wheels You Good to Go* (2006) features a load of white bread on a makeshift four-wheel cart. Three carts of mobile bread are connected by a long piece of red rope and rest atop a projection of a world map that simulates the ease of capital's mobility in the colonial and post-colonial

worlds. Bread, as vernacular for money and as central to European social life since the Industrial Revolution, serves a number of purposes in this piece. As a way to think about Trinidad's relationship to modernity via capitalism, bread highlights our everyday implication in capitalist processes through consumption. The mobility of the bread on Cozier's cart gestures towards the very dubious machinations by which free and unfree African, Indian and Chinese bodies were forced, deceived and lured to travel to both the Caribbean and Canada. The ability to move and the requirement to keep on moving in the diaspora are intimately tied to our ability to consume. The labour Diasporas necessitated by the completion of the Panama canal, the Cuban sugar industry's intensification and Southern American and Ontario seasonal fruit-picking programs gesture to the centrality of mobility and consumption in the lives of Caribbean peoples. In Cozier's piece, Diaspora becomes a tool with which to survive, manipulate and



Michael Fernandes. *The Room of Fears*. Courtesy: The Robert McLaughlin Gallery.



Deanna Bowen. *(truth)seer*, 2005, video still. Courtesy: the artist.

critique one's conditions, even within the clutches of late capital in the West.

The late Maud Sulter's³ *Les Bijoux* (2002) along with Deanna Bowen's *(truth)seer* (2005) provide critiques of two of history's most intimate partners: patriarchy and the Church. Bowen uses an 18-minute video loop to recast the biblical battle of David and Goliath. Her version does not feature two men in a testosterone-filled epic battle, but rather two Asian twins who trouble the power and gender inscriptions of the story. The doubleness represented by the twins can be read as both a condition similar to W.E.B. DuBois' double consciousness⁴, and an attempt to bring the yin and the yang into the meta-narrative of the Church's univocal historical position. Bowen's own less-than-ideal history with the Christian Church is represented in

the continuously interrupted video narrative. In the video, we witness symbols and objects such as chromosomes and a gun, being drawn onto the video screen, at times directly on top of an woman's heads and faces. Curiously, Bowen's work displaces the figure of the black woman, forcing viewers to wrestle with her narrative rather than fixate on her appearance.

Fixate is the best way to describe what Sulter's serious eyes, in her nine self-portraits in *Les Bijoux*, do to their viewer. In this piece, Sulter embodies the historical figure of Jeanne Duval, a mulatta woman known to be the lover of French poet Charles Baudelaire. In two of these portraits, Sulter as Duval looks away from the viewer, her neck laced with pearls. She is adorned by five different necklaces in the nine portraits

and four different dresses highlighting Duval's material comfort.

From seducing to serious to solemn, the portraits of *Les Bijoux* rehumanize and make agents out of the Black female. In two of the portraits we do not see Baudelaire's "maîtresse des maîtresses" (mistress of mistresses)⁵, but Jeanne Duval decidedly refusing eye contact with her audience. In two other portraits, Sulter stares directly at us as she vigorously pulls at her necklace as if it were a noose, eyes wide open as if to soak in the last moment of light before the onset of the darkness of death. In this historical rewriting, the Sulter/Duval remix provides us with another version of Jeanne Duval with shorter hair than she was known to have; a defiant refusal of the "good hair" notion that men like Baudelaire openly

Diaspora as an intellectual resource makes other kinds of conversations possible: conversations where the Canadian state is not the only audible voice, and conversations where the structures that constrict Black life do not become reinscribed.

fetishized. Importantly, Sulter's versions of Duval are all portraits from her shoulders upward, denying viewers a look at her entire body. Unlike Édouard Manet's 1862 painting of Duval in *Baudelaire's Mistress, Reclining*, we are able to see Duval's entire body, including her feet, Sulter refuses physical disclosure. Given the ways in which South African Saartjie Baartman was dehumanized as the Hottentot Venus and the Black woman's body today continues to be a site of male patriarchal and racialized desires, Sulter's Duval portraits are important resistant texts that bring a feminist flavour to a post-Wollstonecraft figure.

My Father's House (1997) is a video recording of Sulter's estranged Ghanaian father's 72-hour funeral ceremony. Although Sulter participated in the ceremony it was held in Fanti, a language she cannot speak. In this sense, Sulter is the audience rather than author of this piece, reminding us of the inherent hybridity of the colonial enterprise. Sulter's own mixed-race heritage places her both inside and outside of specific locations of Blackness, in this case outside Ghanaian culture. Her geographic and cultural displacement from Scotland signal how blackness gets made and unmade in different spaces, revealing the at times "impure" histories we do not imagine to exist. In moving from her embodiment of Jeanne Duval to her peripheralized position at her father's funeral, Sulter's two pieces confound stories of origin, authenticity and purity.

Reading the Image presents us with a way of reading that centres Black folk not only as objects of the Western gaze but also as practitioners of a politics of representation that is inclusive of the diversity within the category, "Black." Through the works of Bowen, Cozier, Fernandes and Sulter, we

are exposed to the religious, patriarchal and capitalist influences that make Blackness in the African Diaspora a diverse and complicated entity. The works in *Reading the Image* take up themes that are not unique to Black life; indeed, we are often positioned to ask: "what does this have to do with the African Diaspora?" Such a line of inquiry is precisely one of the most important functions of the exhibit; the audience is forced to elaborate its notions of Blackness, to seek connections to previously uncharted spaces, and to connect ideas formerly understood as unrelated. The relational thinking that is encouraged by projects like *Room of Fears* pushes audiences to consider the pedagogical implications of fear, especially the connection, between fear, action and the making of the self.

The practices of Diaspora at work in the pieces included in this exhibit speak across a number of historical constraints, such as colonial geographies and economic systems not suited for tiny mono-crop islands. The Afrodiasporic condition is didactic, for it presents a number of strategies by which we might re-read the present. Diaspora as an intellectual resource makes other kinds of conversations possible: conversations where the Canadian state is not the only audible voice, and conversations where the structures that constrict Black life do not become reinscribed. Thus, *Reading the Image* highlights how Blackness comes into being as a performance that utilizes a Diasporic sensibility to navigate, rewrite or continue to write what it might mean to be Black. □

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Notes:

1. See Glissant's *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Writings*. (USA: CARAF Books: 1989).
2. See *Reconstructing 'Dropout': A Critical Ethnography of the Dynamics of Black Students' Disengagement from School*. ed. George J. Sefa Dei et al. (Canada: University of Toronto Press: 1997).
3. Maud Sulter unfortunately left this world on February 27, 2008.
4. See *The Souls of Black Folk* by W.E.B. DuBois (1903).
5. Baudelaire describes her as such in his poem "Le Balcon/The Balcony" ca. 1856.

Mediating Indigineity —

The Journals of Knud Rasmussen:

A Sense of Memory and High-definition Inuit Storytelling

EDITED BY Gillian Robinson

REVIEW BY Heather Igloliorte

Storytelling is more than a way of transmitting knowledge "across time and tundra," as the familiar phrase goes; it is the primary means by which Inuit and many other global Indigenous histories have been recorded for centuries. As such, our stories bear the weight of cultural identity and self-definition. As Norman Cohn recently remarked, "From the Gutenberg Press to the iPod is a New York minute in the history of the human race. [...] Once books have disappeared, your stories have to carry more information than you realize." In Isuma Productions' latest publication, *The Journals of Knud Rasmussen*, filmmakers Zacharias Kunuk and Norman Cohn, along with 25 other authors, reflect on how film functions as a high-tech storytelling medium and vehicle for cultural memory. The collection questions how film and new media have addressed, circumvented or supplemented the absence of a literary tradition in many Indigenous cultures and the presence of written histories from cultural outsiders. Ultimately, this compilation asks whether film can serve as a continuation of oral traditions and oral history and reflects the desire "to show how new ways of storytelling today can help our community survive." (p.9) While no simple panacea exists to remedy the ill effects of colonization and the loss of collective memory brought on by the circumstances described in *The Journals of Knud Rasmussen*, this volume presents a complex and nuanced argument that "high-definition" storytelling through film and digital media can be an effective way to transmit our stories.

Linking this diverse group of authors — Inuit, Aboriginal, Japanese, Guatemalan and others — is their shared engagement with the screenplay for *The Journals* (included in both English and Inuktitut syllabics). The film tells the story of the last great Igloodik shaman, Avva, and his daughter Apak, the only one of

The Journals of Knud Rasmussen

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A Sense of Memory and High-definition Inuit Storytelling

his children to have inherited Avva's shamanic abilities. It opens with Avva and his family living on the land, having left their home community of Igloolik, which has been converted to Christianity. Rasmussen, a Danish anthropologist who speaks their language, reaches their camp and implores them to share their songs and stories, which he meticulously records, later requesting that they take him to Igloolik (despite the hesitation of Apak and the others). The trek to Igloolik is hindered by blizzards and a lack of food, and by the film's end, Avva and his family have joined the Igloolik Inuit in their evangelization. Under the threat of impending starvation, they find that they must join the others in singing Christian hymns in order to join them in a meal. As Floyd Favel writes in his thoughtful summary, "these films by [Kunuk and Cohn] are not simply tales of the march of civilization encountering the autochthonous cultures of the taiga and tundra, these films are about life itself and the limits of rationality." (p.16) Complete with over 100 colour film stills and reproductions of Rasmussen's own black-and-white photographs of Avva and his family in 1922, this volume depicts with breathtaking clarity the harsh reality of life that led to "four thousand years of oral history silenced by fifty years" of Christianity and colonialism in the Canadian Arctic. (p.9)

Contributions by Paul Chaat Smith, Lee Maracle, Hugh Brody, Catherine Martin and others reflect upon this historical narrative, the destruction of collective memory through cultural upheaval and the capacity of digital storytelling to restore what has been lost or concealed. While the common thread linking this diverse group of essays is their shared response to the film, this thematic undertaking only loosely structures the contents of the book, as the authors engage with the film in varying degrees of depth and complexity.

Editor Gillian Robinson asks in her introduction, "Can a film as 'real' as *The Journals of Knud Rasmussen* ever take on the fluid properties of true human remembering, that is, old fashioned storytelling?" (p.9) This line of inquiry sets the tone for much of the explorations in the book. In her chapter "Mapping Our Way Through History," Lee Maracle variously reflects on the problems and promise of film and new media as high-tech narrative mediums. Does high-definition storytelling, the transmission of knowledge in a digital format, fix stories or preserve heritage? Maracle argues that, while the topography of the film charts the loss of social direction

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and the fragmentation of memory, it also includes within it a route to cultural "re-memberment" through the distinctly Inuit voice that Kunuk and Cohn have recovered from the Danish source material. (p.22-23)

The text is interspersed with several works of poetry, including selections by Neal McLeod, Louise Bernice Halfe, Lee Maracle, David Suzuki (that's right, David Suzuki) and the late Alootook Ipellie, whose deeply personal poems are embedded within a characteristically frank and revealing essay, providing a complicated critique of the impact of evangelization and colonization in the North. Ipellie leaves his Inuit readers with a call to action, challenging the descendants of the First Peoples of the Arctic to "dig through materials that have been recovered from their long-lost forebears' stories, legends and mythologies — not least to assure today's living generations something of 'reincarnated cultural treasures' which will once again serve to enlighten today's Inuit youth." (p.82)

The need for film projects to reincarnate this sense of memory is echoed later in the essay "Speaking from the Heart of Collective Memories," contributed by Mi'kmaq filmmaker Catherine Martin. Martin argues that the utilization of film by Aboriginal storytellers has been necessitated by the proliferation of historical accounts told from outside Indigenous worldviews, which complicate and confound our ability to understand what we are to learn from our ancestors' stories. In film, Martin has found a way to ensure that Mi'kmaq stories will be passed into the future "in a way that will not confuse our generations to come when they are searching for truths, for identity, for teaching." (p.243) In this way, Martin and the other authors of this volume create a space for decolonization in the digital realm.

Investigating how Aboriginal peoples arrived at this point in their written history is a significant concern of the text. In Kristen Norget's well-researched essay "The Hunt for Inuit Souls: Religion, Colonization and the Politics of Memory," (p.217) the author traces the double helix of colonization and Christianity in the Arctic, arguing that "for Inuit, the organic archive of knowledge that underlays their culture was gradually eroded over a period of a couple hundred years" by these parallel forces of transculturation. (p.218) Norget's comprehensive examination allows us to penetrate with profundity that which the film only reveals tangentially: how

the first Inuit came to be evangelized and how this project fit within the "civilizing mission" of the pervasive European epistemology of evolutionism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, which judged all cultures by a Eurocentric standard of "civilization." (p.228)

Significantly, Norget concludes by theorizing that *The Journals of Knud Rasmussen* acts as a form of cultural "re-appropriation." He argues that the film facilitates the decolonization process by restoring or re-imagining those aspects of Inuit collective cultural memory that in some cases have been buried in historical photographs and archival documents. Photographs and documents like those preserved in Rasmussen's *Across Arctic America: Narrative of the Fifth Thule Expedition*.

Most recently, Isuma (translated as "thinking") Productions has created a new and entirely unique forum for the restoration and remembering of Inuit and Indigenous collective memory on the web. The world's first interactive website of its kind, www.isuma.tv, is an online nexus for sharing and disseminating Indigenous films from all over the world. So far, their site hosts over 100 films in seven languages and Indigenous "channels" of shorts and features ranging from the films of Canadian Aboriginal youth artist collective 7th Generation Image Makers and videos of the Arctic Youth Circus Group to stop-motion movies from the Haida Gwaii and films from Indigenous groups in Greenland, Mexico, and Sweden.

Isuma uses the internet to democratize mass media, giving marginalized voices the opportunity to reach like-minded Indigenous filmmakers and global audiences, free of charge, on a grassroots level. In 2008-2009, Isuma intends to expand this incredible resource even further: first, by gathering and digitizing the Inuit and Aboriginal media archive of the past three decades; and second, by training young and emerging Inuit and Indigenous filmmakers to express their cultures and points of view in new creative works. This incredible digital forum is an invaluable resource that supplements the prior efforts of Isuma Productions to educate the Inuit and the world at large about our collective history, telling our stories in high-definition. □

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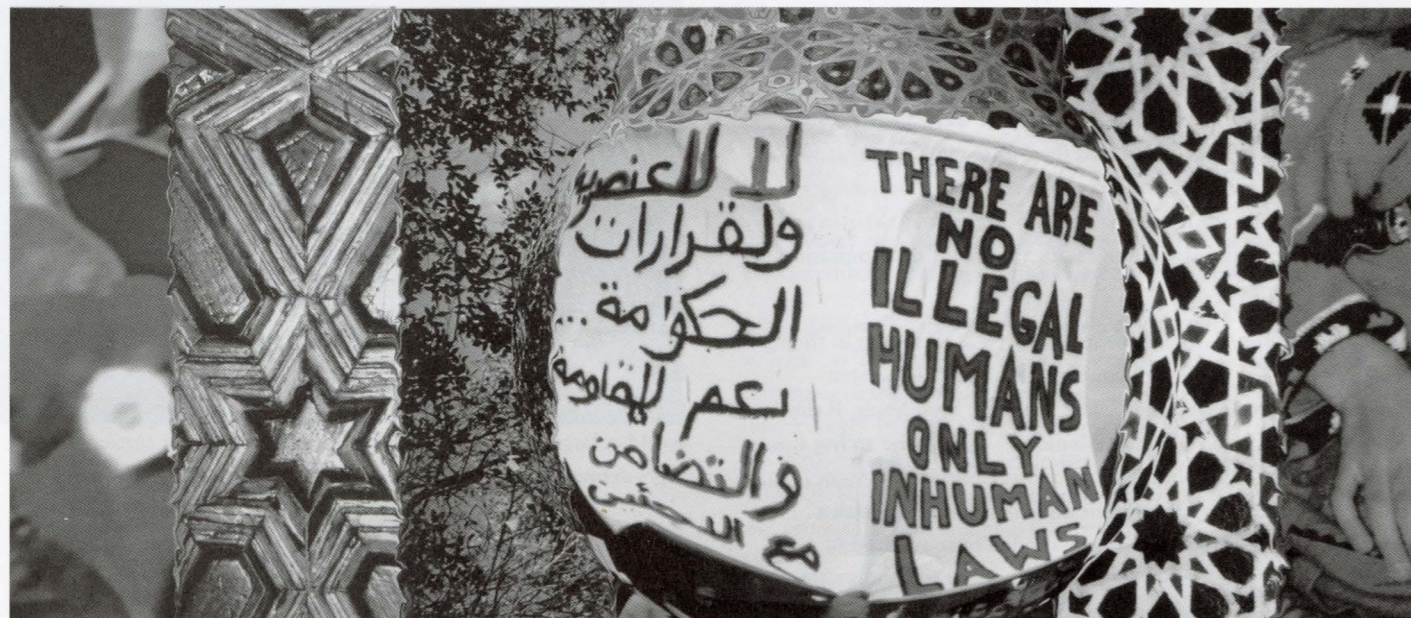
RE-IMAGINING THE "EAST"

Orientalism & Ephemera

Ottawa Art Gallery • 23 November 2007 – 3 February 2008

CURATED BY Jamelie Hassan REVIEW BY Deborah Kirk

The prospect of any survey show can be daunting given that breadth is a precondition; add to that a dose of postcolonial theory and a vast collection of objects culled from diverse cultural sources, and the effect might prove positively dizzying. It seems all the more remarkable then, that the recent exhibition *Orientalism & Ephemera*, curated by Jamelie Hassan, was so successful in its aims to explore notions of the "East," a complex and highly contested cultural space in its own right.



Fabiola Nabil Naguib. *Archives Re/Imagined (1/5 in Series I)*, 2005. Courtesy: the artist.



<top left> Display case: ephemeral artefacts, souvenirs, pamphlets, postcards, catalogues, travel and commercial items, documents and photographs and glass lamps from the Café Nil in Vienna. Photo: David Barbour. Courtesy: Ottawa Art Gallery.

<bottom left> *Orientalism & Ephemera* display case (ephemeral artefacts, souvenirs, pamphlets, postcards, catalogues, travel and commercial items, documents and photographs). Courtesy: Ottawa Art Gallery.

<right> Julie Sando. *Best Sensuous Hands*, 2004. Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Krista Buecking, Art Metropole.

Hassan's success here is due to her ability to articulate a well defined project while exercising a measure of restraint in the quantity of additional contextual information provided; that is, to afford sufficient framing of the work to guide its reception without overwhelming the viewer or unduly prescribing meaning. At the entrance, a short introductory text panel sets out the curatorial thesis: to create a place for dialogue and to reclaim the textures, narratives and voices of the Middle East otherwise suppressed in the reductive processes of representation and historicization. With the exhibition's title, Hassan locates the project in the postcolonial

tradition with a nod to the work of Edward Said and his landmark book on the subject, *Orientalism* (1978). Posters and brochures outlining Said's lecture series and conferences take centre stage alongside Hassan's own (and only) curatorial commentary.

Inside, the collection of objects selected represents a wide range of contemporary and historical examples of Eastern visual culture. Personal and public, memento and disposable goods; the grouping includes everything from academic texts and chewing gum, to video work, consumer items and commercial pamphlets. Organized predominantly around

the perimeter of the single gallery, with larger two-dimensional objects hanging on walls and smaller or irregular articles housed in commercial style display cases, the collection is at first glance decidedly unspectacular. Perhaps in its understated appearance, the space seems at odds with culturally conceived notions of the "Oriental," that evokes vibrant palettes, rich textures and ornately patterned surfaces. In their absence of colour, even the lanterns that hang in a tidy row above the vitrines fail to meet with our expectations of the bazaar as a colourful and cacophonous centre of sights and sounds. Instead, white walls, flat lighting and a



<left> Lope Serrano with the Collaboration of Rosa Capdevila. *La crispación de las identidades: el intercambio De Kooning—Sháh Námeh*. Tightening of identities: *The De Kooning—Sháh Námeh Exchange*, 2005. Courtesy: Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain.



<top right> Ramona Ramlochand. *In Conversation II*, 2000. Courtesy: collection of the Ottawa Art Gallery.

<bottom right> Johanna Kandl. *Speaking in Public*. Republished for the exhibition *Orientalism & Ephemera*, 2007. Photo: Rémi Thériault. Courtesy: Ottawa Art Gallery



Ernest Normand. *Bondage*, 1907. Courtesy of: Jamelie Hassan, Gift of Carol Libby, formerly in the collection of the late William L. Libby, Sr. Washington, D.C.

seemingly haphazard display of artifacts are all that greet the viewer. These, coupled with a growing anticipation of close and onerous inspection, leave little to immediately inspire.

But Hassan's is a decidedly anti-heroic approach, one that voices the imperatives of the postcolonial paradigm in its formal design and aesthetic expression. As both a strategy for recovery of meaning and a counterpoint to the proliferation of the harmful images of violence and social turmoil that dominate our visual culture, Hassan's use of the everyday object works to restore value and complexity to the notion of Orientalism in defiantly human terms.

Despite first impressions, the underwhelming presentation is perhaps the very key to the exhibition's ultimate success. Given the

diversity and diminutive scale of many objects, their close and careful examination is all but guaranteed. This strategy establishes a privileged and intimate relationship between object and viewer, allowing the unique character and qualities of each to be considered. Small ephemera are grouped together in a long case along one wall, with little or no further explanation of their genesis, while transparent labels quietly name larger articles around the room in a simple notation of identifying information. With limited curatorial intervention, objects are foregrounded; they disclose the values invested in their own making while encouraging the viewer to draw comparisons and identify conflicts in the negotiation between and among artifacts themselves.

Similarly, thematic concerns are revealed in the viewer's efforts to reconcile disparate elements. For example, the uneasy conflation of exoticism and the "East" is raised through the repetition of sexualized imagery and allusions. In Ernest Normand's *Bondage* (1907, based on a painting from 1895), a dark-skinned woman portrayed as temptress, unabashed and vaguely threatening, defiantly looks out to meet the viewer's gaze; in *Made for Europe* (2000), a photograph by Lisl Ponger captures the languid figure of a woman reclining passively before the camera who appears unmoved by her objectification; and in the refashioning of a traditional burqa by an Afghani designer, remade as a daring evening gown (c. 1978). Each work captures in some respect the dynamics implicit in the desire and estrangement that exoticism demands.



Farhang Jalali. From the *Magnet Project*, 2003-ongoing. Courtesy: Collection of Jamelie Hassan.

Issues surrounding life in the Diaspora, appropriation and the challenges of cultural exchange are also addressed in a variety of artifacts and works, including the curious “Souvenir of Pt. Burwell, Canada” plate, which features the pyramids of Giza, complete with camels and the quirky video piece by Lope Serrano (in collaboration with Rosa Capdevila) entitled, *Tightening of identities: the de Kooning – Shah Nameh exchange* (2005), which animates the circumstances leading up to the repatriation of two significant cultural works previously stored away from the public eye for decades. The short video-collage, pieced together from various image and text sources, retells the tale culminating in the eventual trade of the *Shah Nameh*, an ancient Persian manuscript, for a Willem de Kooning painting, *Woman III*, on the tarmac of a Vienna airport in 1994. While insightful as commentary on the complexities of cultural negotiations, these oddities also serve to broaden the discursive field. With humour, wit and

colour, they provide alternative points of access to long-standing debates, while bringing levity to a discussion for which the default position is too often characterized by sobriety alone.

As a place for dialogue, Hassan’s objective to “create an alternative space from which to consider the innumerable manifestations of Orientalism” is aptly enough met. Although it is by no means exhaustive, opportunities for discourse certainly arise while avoiding the fixed determinism of historical models. In keeping with principles of inclusivity, multiplicity and integration, the collection resists both value-laden and hierarchical distinctions among articles displayed, as well as any impulse toward linearity in their organization. The decision to curtail didactic material in the exhibition space and the absence of a catalogue are not only in line with Hassan’s theoretical model, but create a powerful and immediate opportunity for the viewer to identify directly with materials and ideas at hand.

Hassan’s project marks a rejection of absolute and divisive cultural categories without obliterating the rich distinctions that exist within them; instead, she looks to find consensus in a shared sense of humanity. As the centrepiece to a series of events on the subject of Orientalism, her vision and execution of *Orientalism & Ephemera* echo Said’s call for integration in her opening statement. In conjunction with various discussion forums and film screenings in host cities nationwide, Hassan’s work moves beyond the gallery space to raise questions about the location of meaning and to rethink possibilities for what can be said and by whom. The outcome is a startlingly sensitive and meaningful meditation on our fascination and complicated relationship with the “East.” □

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Angela Dorrer. *Urban Pilgrims Copenhagen*, 2008. Photo: Anders Birger Schjær, ring. Courtesy: the artist.

Walking the Line — Angela Dorrer’s *Urban Pilgrims*, Copenhagen and Christiania

3 November 2007 – 5 February 2008

REVIEW BY Tomas Jonsson

Within an increasing climate of conservatism and xenophobia in Denmark, two incidents in 2007 highlighted how radically the political and social landscape has shifted in recent years. That spring, the Danish Liberal Party issued a “normalization plan” for the free town of Christiania. Occupying the site of a former military base since 1972, Christiania was established by people wishing to live according to autonomous and collective principles outside of the surrounding municipal and state frameworks. In contrast to this vision, the state’s new plan included provisions to introduce individual property ownership structures and a gradual shift towards market values for the formerly collectively-owned property.

Meanwhile in the Nørrebro district of Copenhagen, a years-old threat of eviction for Ungdomshuset (youth house) — a long-established underground music venue

and community site for leftist and anarchist groups located at Jagtvej 69 — was enacted. The government-owned building was put up for sale and purchased by the conservative religious group Faderhuset. The former tenants of the building refused to give up the space and staged a number of protests. After a period of intense conflict between protesters and police, the site was cleared and demolished.

Community response to these two situations was dramatic and often polarizing. Activists and police clashed violently as activists attempted to secure a new space and weekly protest marches wound through city streets to the site of Jagtvej 69. Protesters set up barricades to the gates of Christiania, and graffiti imploring passersby to “save Christiania” and “give back the youth house” appeared across the city. The severity of the protests, along with damage to property and

public space, sharply divided the opinions of local citizens.

Looking at the context of protest culture in Europe, Lazar and Slenkiewicz ask if “it is possible to make out of demonstrations, or the kind of activity that gathers a lot of people in the public space, a kind of real discussion that would allow more than just expressing your statement or opinion. If the strategies of art would be implemented on demonstrations, could it result in some kind of social platforms that would enable real dialogue and real social negotiations within the public space?”¹ The opportunity for just this type of discussion was facilitated in *Urban Pilgrims*, a project realized by German-Canadian artist Angela Dorrer. The project is an ongoing series of excursions into the fine grain of urban environments, adopting the form of a traditional religious pilgrimage or procession.

Over the course of four months and two concurrent residencies, Dorrer engaged with local residents in public spaces such as cafes and saunas, through regular columns in the Christiania newsletter and on the street. She also promoted a series of online surveys through stickers, on the home page of the computers at a popular Christiania café and on the *Wonderful Copenhagen* tourist portal. The information she gathered informed a series of procession-oriented projects that articulated subjective and poetical understandings of the city. She posed questions such as “if you were a good fairy and could grant one wish to Copenhagen, what would it be?” Responses included: “Copenhagensers should be able to make other people feel nice;” “I would give Copenhagen 1 million foreign settlers, in order for the Danes to become a minority;” “That it would be set free to do what it liked, room for a little more chaos and difference. Copenhagen — become more curious!”



Angela Dorrer. Enter Christiania. Go through Pusher Street listening to the Funeral March of Godfather, *Urban Pilgrims Copenhagen*, 2008. Photo: Nis Jensen. Courtesy: the artist.

Dorrer's blog entries were meandering, based on her daily encounters and activities. Her observations ranged from Danish politics to tips for dealing with winter depression. Readers could expand on these entries, and some engaged in discussion. These personal exchanges allowed Dorrer to build up a sense of trust and connection that expanded the narratives.

Blog Entry 17.01.2008, 16:59. http://urbanpilgrims.org/Copenhagen_Christiania/blog

S. told me that when there was that Ungdomshuset crisis many people, who before and for a long time had “kept quiet” now thought: Enough is enough. And they went on the streets. N. said that also a lot of people joined in the riots to get rid of their frustrations. The riots were a valve (German: ,ventil’) for something that had been cooking ... He was part of an anti-violence-group that tried to convince people that violence is not the proper reaction and will only cause more violence.

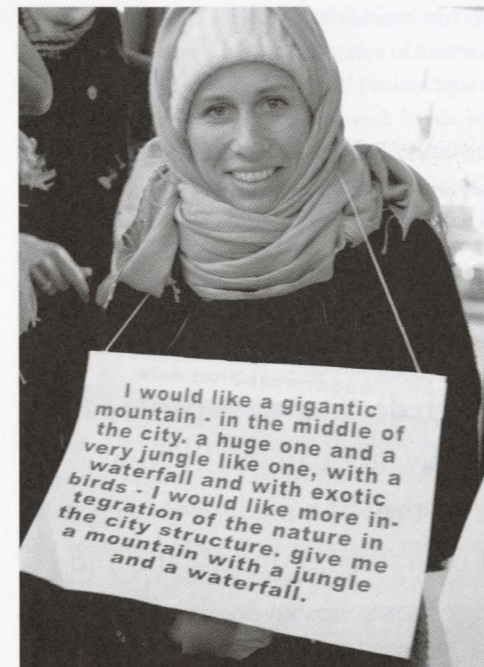
When I asked who those frustrated people were, N. said a lot of 2nd generation foreigners who do not feel accepted in this country. Someone had told me earlier that if I would have a kid now and here in Denmark chances were high that it would not be accepted by the Danish society. I was shocked to hear that.

Ok. But when is this spiral gonna end? If the Danes do not learn to integrate foreign ideas, people, creativity, energy, etc. the spiral will not end. So again these extremes: white-black, right-left, foreign-local. Come on, get a bit softer Denmark.

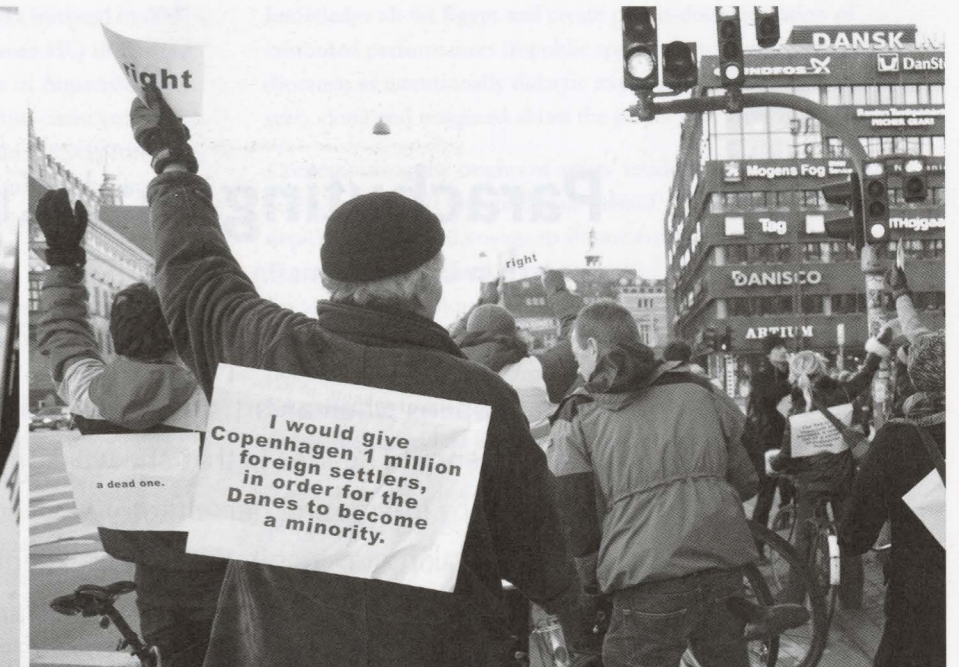
Talking about this another person said he does not see it so negative, instead he thinks that the riots kind of shook a lot of people up and made the community around Ungdomshuset much stronger. That's also an aspect that should be kept in mind.

Dorrer's approach moves beyond the conventional polemics of protest and counter-protest that are increasingly common in Copenhagen. Engaging on a personal level and as an outsider means not having to adhere to the inherent processes and logics that typically determine actions such as demonstrations, where solidarity can override individual and varied positioning. Instead, her project intersects a number of social dynamics and allows varied positions to be expressed. As Dorrer notes, “Naturally and through the accumulation of answers, issues of power relationships, spatial structures, image production and forms of urban appropriation will be addressed.”²

Dorrer adopted and considered the dynamics of a crowd in a poetic and open process in two public *Urban Pilgrimages* in January and February 2008. Over the course of a day in January, a dedicated group of 50 people took part in a bicycle pilgrimage across the city, taking part in several performative activities that symbolically addressed the political and social dimensions of Copenhagen. The route of the tour, for example, was at some points determined by vote, by holding up sheets



Angela Dorrer. Wish for Copenhagen from the Online Survey, *Urban Pilgrims Copenhagen*, 2008. Photo: Nis Jensen. Courtesy: the artist.



Angela Dorrer. Vote for directions, *Urban Pilgrims Copenhagen*, 2008. Photo: Nis Jensen. Courtesy: the artist.

of paper for right or left, referring to the dramatic political shifts in Denmark and the dualism that currently divides citizens of different social and political positions. Many participants wore prints of wishes for Copenhagen that had been generated by Dorrer's survey, in order to share them with passersby.

Urban Pilgrims offered a response to a common Danish condition: the conflict between the desire to be exceptional and the desire for consensus or “jante,” a particularly Danish idea that one should never think herself better than anyone else. Dorrer played with these paradoxical desires by inviting participants to visit the Royal Palace and send their wishes to the Queen (who is viewed as “exceptional” without holding any “extraordinary” political powers). Afterwards she invited them to wear crowns and taught them a royal baroque greeting.

The group continued on its journey by paying a visit to a shwarma kiosk and handing out flowers to the owners and patrons as a gesture of goodwill in contrast to the increasing xenophobia of the city. The tour ended at the artist's residency, where

Dorrer had earlier discovered a free space — a swimming pool that could be secretly accessed from her building — which had unfortunately been closed, prompting a discussion (that concluded the event) about the importance and possibilities of free spaces in light of Copenhagen's increasing restriction and regulation of urban space.

During a panel discussion in conjunction with an exhibition of the Atlas Group at the Art Gallery of York University in 2004, Marie-Joëlle Zahar, Professor of Political Science at the Université de Montréal commented on the value of the work's ambiguous approach to its subject matter. The semi-fictitious scenario presented by Walid Raad allowed her a degree of freedom to speak beyond her position as a political scientist. This was in marked contrast to her experience in more conventional situations, where she was required to maintain her position against those of others.

Notes:

1. Anna Lazer & Karol Slenklewicz. “Why are our demonstrations...” in *Public Preparation*. ed. Rael Artel and Airi Triisber. (Tartu: Public Preparation: 2007)
2. www.urbanpilgrims.org

Dorrer's work provides a similar escape or pressure valve to the polarized positions that have defined recent conflicts in Copenhagen. While not denying the importance of defending one's position, *Urban Pilgrims* allowed a degree of ambiguity and personality to open up a space for dialogue and understanding. As Denmark comes to terms with the implications of the events of 2007, Dorrer's call for a softer approach allows for the acceptance of difference and dialogue over enforced normalization. □

Tomas Jonsson is an artist, curator and writer with an interest in issues of urban growth and transformation. Jonsson is pursuing a Master's in Environmental Studies at York University in Toronto and is currently participating in the Border Cities Kolleg at the Bauhaus Dessau Foundation in Dessau, Germany.

Parachuting In: I Know the World

CURATED BY Lise Nellemann • SMART Project Space • 12 January – 1 March 2008

REVIEW BY Milena Placentile

What happens when an artist arrives at a foreign destination to participate in a residency? The idea is that she will somehow take part in a cultural exchange by integrating herself into the civic rhythm of a place, not merely a visitor soaking up inspiration but an agent operating to understand and mediate local culture. For a short-term arrangement, however, this is a tremendous amount of responsibility, a naive expectation.



J&K. *Egyptomanias*, 2006 – 2007. Photo: Gerjan Knonigs. Courtesy: artists and SMART Project Space.

I Know the World is a series of exhibitions and talks initiated in 2007 by Lise Nellemann, Director/Curator of Sparwasser HQ in Berlin. The version presented at SMART Project Space in Amsterdam was the fourth incarnation. Featuring work by six artists/artist collectives, the exhibition intended to inject some reality into the way international residences are discussed (as sites of profound intercultural dialogue, for example) by addressing themes of internationalism, mobility and cultural difference.

Like any traveler, many artists arrive at a new place with preconceived notions based on anecdotes or stereotypes. Calling attention to their experience of a residency in Egypt as one of complexity and conflict, while acknowledging their urges for the romanticisms of tourism, Danish/German collective J&K portrayed contemporary Egypt as a *mélange* of cultures from different periods in history, including those imported by and for the MTV generation today. As a conflation of various assumptions, misinformation, myths, and fantasies, *Egyptomanias* (2006 – 2007) is a self-reflective examination of the artists' experiences and reactions. The piece draws attention to the uneasy position of artists functioning as "cultural researchers." Through the appropriation of anthropological/natural history methods of display, the artists consider their lack of profound

knowledge about Egypt and create photo-documentation of costumed performances in public space, photo-based cutouts and dioramas as intentionally didactic expressions of what they have seen, done and imagined about the places they have explored.

Contemplating the origins of artists' residencies in a project called *Ud! Ude! Hjem!* (*Outward Bound! Abroad! Homeward!*), Soren Lose depicted the typical voyage to Rome conducted by 19th-century Danish artists to remark on the cliché of traveling to foreign hotspots for artistic inspiration. Responding in particular to the case of an artist named Bertel Thorvaldsen (who lived most of his life in Rome but whom the Danes regard as a cultural hero), Lose pointed out how those at home are generally the last to acknowledge local talent, unless the individual in question has gained recognition abroad.

The privileged position of an artist in residence is explored in the project *SET UP TOURS – navigations in the periphery of freedom* (2007 – 2008) by Tanja Nellemann Poulsen & Grete Aagaard. The Danish collective critically engages with the tourism industry's marketing of travel as the route to freedom through an installation featuring a scrolling light board that asks provocative questions and issues pleading opposition to the behaviour of many tourists. In



J&K. *Horus and Anubis in Islamic Cairo*, 2006 – 2007. Photo: Gerjan Knonigs. Courtesy: artists and SMART Project Space.

The Inverted Residency
A story by Daniëlle van Zuijlen
Part II: a five-year residency in Hoom (NL)

The Inverted Residency

Inverted Residency p.04
Collaboration p.04
Host/Guest p.05
Guest p.05
Guest I p.05
Guest II p.05

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<this page top left> Daniëlle van Zuijlen. *The Inverted Residency*, 2007. Photo: the artist. Courtesy: the artist and SMART Project Space.

<bottom left> Tanja Nellemann Poulsen & Grete Aagaard. *SET UP TOURS*. Photo: Gerjan Konings. Courtesy: Sparwasser HQ.

<right> Tamar Guimarães. *Jan Leton and the Archive*, 2006. Photo: Gerjan Konings. Courtesy: the artist and SMART Project Space.

<opposite page> Søren Lose. *Ud! Ude! Hjem! (Outward Bound! Abroad! Homeward!)*, 2006. Photo: Gerjan Konings. Courtesy: the artist and SMART Project Space.



particular, the artists encourage viewers to think about the ill effects of luxurious consumption, including the social and political inequities between those living in “exotic” parts of the world and the “tourist class” seeking out a simpler or more glamorous life. The works contributed by Brazilian-born artist Tamar Guimarães were most like the responses to foreign socio-political circumstances one might hope a gutsy visiting artist would aim to undertake. *Jan Leton and the Archive* (2006) and *Listed Entries on Jan Leton born 1771? in the West Indies died 1827 in Skagen. Collected from written sources and oral accounts (1827 – 2006) in chronological order* (2006) are provocative examinations of the history of colonialism and its lingering repercussions in Denmark, Guimarães’ country of residence. The first work consists of a slide projection with voice-over that considers the story of the slave Jan Leton and the history of the Danish Triangular Trade. Using reproductions of the slides as a launching point, an audio recording of the artist’s voice narrates a fictional exchange between a community archivist and a 14-year-old researcher who discovers how one man’s name comes to embody otherness. The narrator describes the researcher as “one foreigner interested in another” and the archivist as someone readily acknowledging the inconsistency of historical accounts. The second project is an intentionally confusing oral catalogue of the many inconsistencies the artist encountered while conducting research. Thus, in both cases, the artist critically highlights and articulates the uncertainties of all historical projects.

Fucking Good Art collective takes an entirely different approach to the notion of artistic residency by making self-titled zines, handbills, posters and full-length books about the art scenes they find in the cities they visit. Their publications serve as an alternative form of journalism for the art world. To quote the artists, it is something they do “in selfless service to [their] community.” The artists started this project in their home base of Rotterdam in December 2003 and have since produced related work in Berlin, Zürich, Riga and Copenhagen, among various other cities. They are extremely effective social networkers and easily insert themselves into local communities by quickly expanding from an initial group of contacts. The publications are primarily text-based, but they challenge conventional expectations in the sense that they embrace freestyle design and interchange between languages without full translation. They were a pleasure to thumb through in the reading room set up for the exhibition.

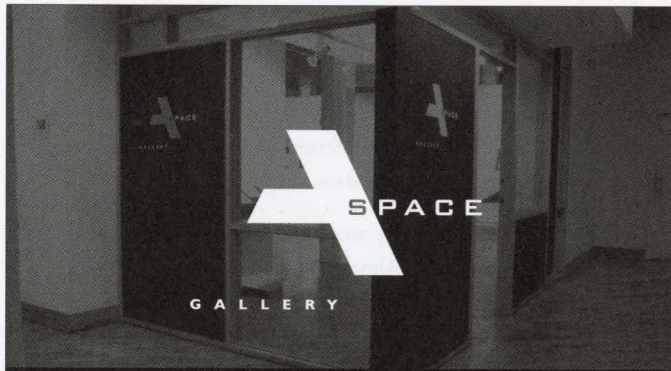
Dutch artist Daniëlle van Zuijlen’s *Inverted Residency* (2003 – 2006) was another text-based project. The idea of van Zuijlen’s five-year residency was that, rather than going abroad, she hosted artists to stay with her in the small Dutch town of Hoom at a production and presentation space called Hotel Mariakapel. The residency invited a group of artists to work collaboratively with van Zuijlen playing host, although she herself was a visitor to Hoom. As interesting as all these facts are and as interesting as the exhibitions of collaborative projects, publications and symposia produced at Hotel Mariakapel

might have been, the starkly designed booklet produced for this exhibition was not any more engaging than an extended artist’s statement. I would have much preferred to encounter a creative interpretation of experience and data.

Although there were not many works in the exhibition, the viewing experience was demanding. Almost all of the works involved a time-based element and the two text-based projects required a tremendous amount of reading, which is never easy to do in a gallery environment, no matter how earnest an exerted effort. I would have liked to give FGA’s work more time in particular, but it was simply impossible. Despite this small difficulty, I found the exhibition to be timely, intelligent, critical and provocative. I remain impressed by the curator’s daring to challenge the status of international residency programs as pivotal to artists’ careers and by her capacity to foster the artists’ consideration of the issue on their own terms. I also appreciated the questions raised through the course of this exhibition, and the different creative strategies embraced to represent artists’ ambitions and responsibilities within the pressurized context of being asked to parachute into a community and respond by critiquing from an outsider’s perspective. □

MILENA PLACENTILE is an independent curator of contemporary art and the Programming Coordinator at Video Pool Media Arts Centre in Winnipeg.





critical art + culture

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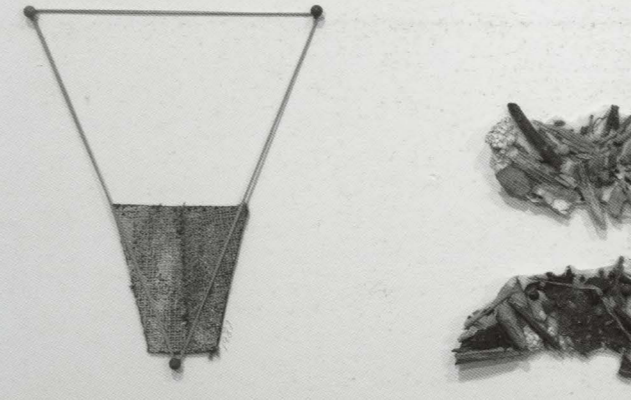
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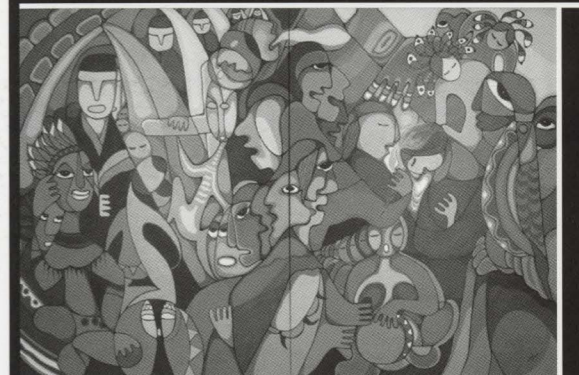
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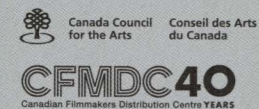
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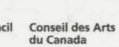
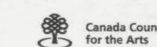
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ART FUSE --- SHORT FUSE --- SHORT FUSE --- SHORT FUSE --- SHORT FUSE --- SHORT FUSE

For several years an idea has nagged at me, lurking partly formed at the back of my mind. The idea is this: when those of us who work in the arts talk about art, especially as it relates to the society as a whole, we tend to speak from a position that takes for granted that the arts constitute a virtuous field of activity. It's precisely the kind of idea that is never expressed directly, but it is one on which a good deal of explicit discourse depends, as a boat depends on water to hold it up.

The word virtue carries with it the scent of a Victorian sitting room. Despite more than a century during which the mainstream of contemporary art has made a great display of rejecting, aggressively, the cultural values of mid-19th century Europe, the field as a whole has continued to rely on a nebulous association with virtue when it represents itself in the public sphere, and all too often in its internal discussions as well. Psychologically and intellectually, this engenders a form of bad faith in dealings with the state, the media, etc., but the effects on thinking within artistic communities are probably more corrosive. To assume the implicit virtue of one's work is to forestall serious self-criticism and analysis. The independence of the artist in discovering the relationship between necessity and its cultural expression is critical, but this independence is meaningless if those who work in the arts are unwilling to undertake an ongoing and searching self-examination.

The implicit recognition of the virtue attached to the field also becomes a form of payment in lieu of public recognition and a decent income. If, like most artists and many other workers in the field, we struggle in obscurity and relative poverty, we are at least consoled by the thought of being engaged in a virtuous activity, and can offer this consolation to others in a similar position. At the same time, the assumption of virtue prevents us from demanding more of ourselves and our work,

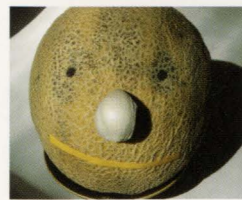
art ^{AND} virtue

CHRIS GEHMAN

which weakens the work, and this in turn drives us to take refuge increasingly in the assumption of virtue, and so on. (In its general outlines, this cycle may be manifested equally in cases of artistic "success," measured by widespread and well-attended exhibition, critical recognition and financial reward, as in cases of the unknown and unrewarded. The assumption of virtue is, in the "successful" case, seen to be confirmed by recognition and rewards, while in the "unsuccessful" case virtue is proven precisely by the lack of such recognition and rewards. This underlines the pernicious nature of the assumption.)

Understanding this dynamic can help us to understand a crucial problem in the application of the "virtuous assumption:" in practice, when governments, foundations, corporations and rich individuals want to make a public display of virtue and generosity in relation to the arts, they tend to invest in living, working artists as an afterthought, or not at all! (Witness the recent largesse lavished by the Ontario government on the AGO, ROM and tourist-friendly Luminato festival, for example; the entire three-year increase to the Ontario Arts Council is equivalent to that allotted to Luminato alone — an organization only in its second year of existence! And this follows well over a decade of severe cuts and subsequent neglect of the OAC.) If the connection of art to virtue is a ghost of the 19th century, how much easier is it for state and capital alike to demonstrate their virtue by throwing money at safe, proven and moribund 19th century art forms such as the ballet, or at conservative institutions such as public galleries and museums, rather than offering support to what might, in some cases, be vital contemporary art practices. Art-making is, under any circumstances, a hit-and-miss proposition for which no guarantees can be offered — except, of course, when the art has already been made, evaluated and canonized, its makers usually safely dead and buried.

There is, I fear, a whole range of similar unexamined ideas underlying arts discourse, but the assumption of virtue is probably the most basic and therefore the most necessary to subject to a thorough critique.



CHRIS GEHMAN is a filmmaker, media arts curator and occasional critic. He was Artistic Director of the Images Festival for four years and co-edited (with Steve Reinke) *The Sharpest Point: Animation at the End of Cinema* (YYZ Books 2005).

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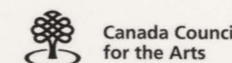
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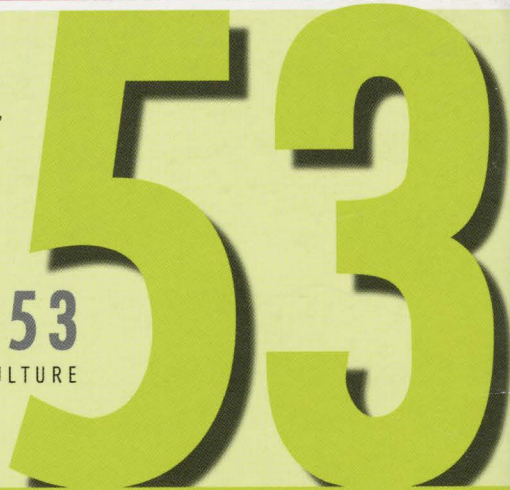
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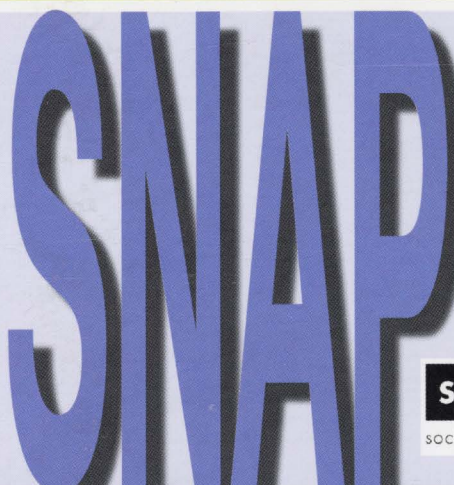
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