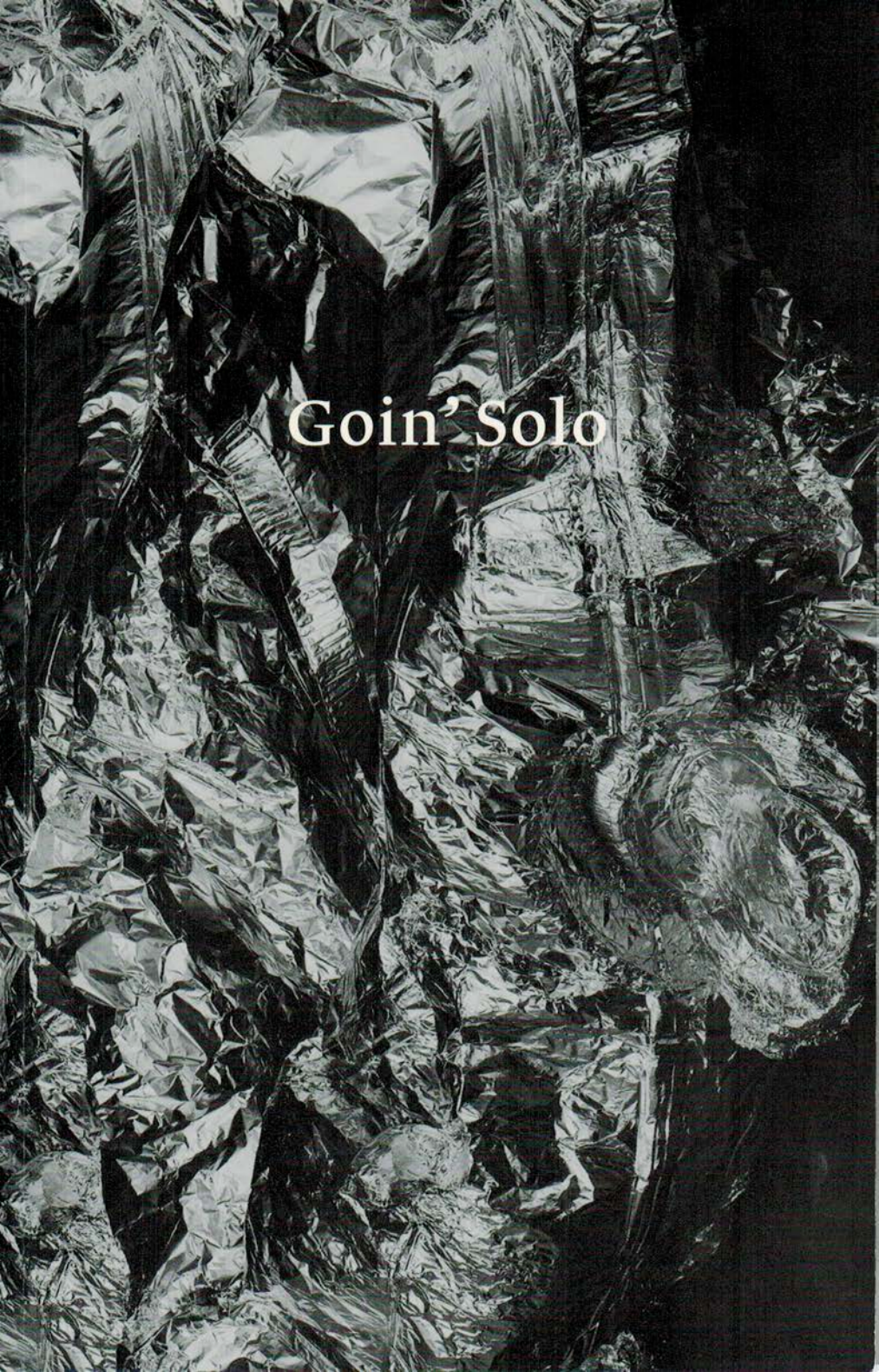




Goin' Solo

The lost glove is happy.

— Zemblan proverb
Nabokov, *Pale Fire*



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Foliage
Sydney Hermant
7

And Speaking of Sisyphus
Sydney Hermant
11

Line Interrupts Landscape
Lucy Pullen
13

Nadia Myre's Portrait in Motion
Daina Warren
17

Demian Petryshyn
Dan Starling
19

Just Passing Through:
Jen Weih's Apollo Hall
Adair Rounthwaite
23

Things My Father Told Me
Denise Oleksijczuk
28

The Future is Now: Some
Thoughts on Yesterday,
Today, and Tomorrow
J.A. Gaitán and Corin Sworn
35

Criminal
Mark Soo
39

Shary Boyle's Companions
Liz Bruchet
43

Rhonda Weppeler
and Trevor Mahovsky
Robyn Laba
47

2048 km
Melanie O'Brian
59

Somewhere Else
Anne Lesley Selcer
63

Captured by the Spider
Doug Smarch Jr
69

Eleanor Morgan's Bestiary
J.A. Gaitán
75

We are On You but Cannot
See You...We are Running
North and South
Ted Hamilton
81



Boucher and Cacciatore, video stills, Natasha McHardy and Marina Roy

Foliage

Sydney Hermant

Roy and McHardy: Marina Roy and Natasha McHardy
February 7 through March 6, 2004

The foliage, that's the book, the body is made of wood.

—Pierre Michon

What I really need now is ideas.

—Dan Bejar

Drag, as derived from the french *draguer*; to drag; to troll for treasures, generally along the bottom of the sea or, in common vernacular, the bars and streets, parties, and parks, for chicks and dudes.

Performing lifestyle, Roy and McHardy create a Rabelaisian vaudeville act of the how-to world of satellite television.

Drag here is used for both gender-bending and stereotyping, taking cues from Flaubert's *Bouvard et Pécuchet*. The latter adopt the appropriate garb of their passing forays into various bodies of knowledge. Bouvard and Pécuchet dress the part, read all the books, and follow the directions, bouncing from theory to contradicting theory, discipline to discipline, inevitably giving up exasperated and defeated. The earth and stars resonate the self-conscious earnestness of their lack: there is simply too much to know, and to what avail? There is no stasis onto which they can successfully latch.

Nature does not make any leaps, and the periods, affirms Brongniart, are, after all, only abstractions.¹

The text anchors itself in a Nietzschean Eternal Recurrence, echoing the literary journeys of other duos, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, and paints a dais for Beckett's Vladimir and Estragon. The perpetual disappointments of Flaubert's last characters do not stop them from trying new disciplines. At the end of the novel however, Bouvard and Pécuchet are bored with everything, life even, and exclaim together: "*Copier comme toujours*," and proceed to revisit the life they despised at the beginning of the novel, the life of copyists.

Lionel Trilling writes in his introduction to the New Directions edition of *Bouvard and Pécuchet* that these two characters are staged as ideas. He also argues that, as to the question of whether or not Flaubert intended them to be read as imbecilic, their friendship and love of ideas, although miscarried, far outweigh their bumbings.²

In "Roy and McHardy," Marina Roy and Natasha McHardy pursue this indigestible pursuit of knowledge as it presents itself contemporaneously as consumer quackery:

Quackery is pretty constant in culture, and it is the detritus of culture, not its essence.³

When their home decorative team of *George and Jorge* talk the viewer through applying faux wood or reupholstering a couch in fun fur, or when they demonstrate painting a landscape in perspective, it is something of a how-to nightmare. They disembowel the logic of DIY by making everything look too arduous or uncomfortable to perform. They agree on very little. An attempt at demonstration leads to a spat and drifts towards the monologue. The affected German played by Roy and the breathy machismo played by McHardy (possibly an Aldo shoe salesman, McHardy suggests) are devices of non-actors heightening an awkward performance. In *Bouver and Cacciatore*, they appear stuffing a chicken in full femme, wigs, and make-up. The characters are complete with heavy French and Jamaican accents and inflections, stereotypes drawn from the artists' family backgrounds. From costume to lighting to acting to set, the entire production is at odds with contemporary aesthetics. It is decidedly low-fi and denaturalized. The artists cite *clinamen*, "a spontaneous deviation from the norm or expected, as the jarring theatrical device to distance the audience: Lucretius attributed creation and creativity (of the mind) to the existence of *clinamen*."⁴ When combined with the antics of a bickering duo, or moments like Roy's face glistening grease by dint of make-up and chicken fat, it comes off as a fall-on-your-face trippy thought; one that got distracted by a snack.

At work here is an analogy between the cable-vision production quality and current art-making practices.

In response to a growing frustration with the parallel structures of capitalist enterprise and art making, where the praxis is farmed out, Roy and McHardy chose the DIY ethos and the collaborative model as an alternative, but not without a little ambivalence. DIY also conjures the jack-of-all-trades. The prismatic life of many artists often involves writing, teaching, curating. Now Sisyphus, he only had one task to perform and look at what he accomplished everyday with just a lousy rock! Everyday! Start again.

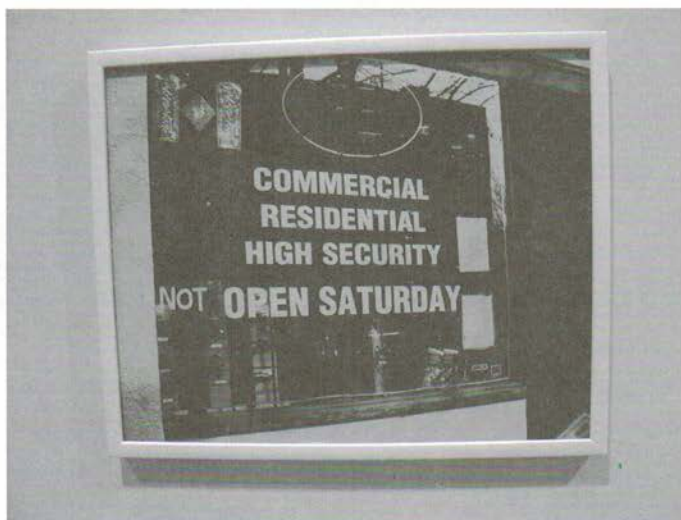
1. Gustave Flaubert, *Bouvard et Pécuchet*. Paris: Editions Gallimard, Edition de Claudine Gothot-Mersch, 1979, p 154.
"...la Nature ne fait pas de sauts et les périodes, affirme Brongniart, ne sont après tout que des abstractions."
2. Flaubert, *Bouvard and Pécuchet*, trans. T.W. Earp and G.W. Stoner, introduction by Lionel Trilling. New York: New Directions, 1954.
3. Lionel Trilling, introduction. Gustave Flaubert, *Bouvard and Pécuchet*, page xxiii.
4. From the artists' own writing.



George and Jorge, video still,
Natasha McHardy and Marina Roy



Gig Gathering 1, Leigh Bridges



Timetakers 1, Denise Oleksijczuk

And Speaking of Sisyphus

Sydney Hermant

Hurry Slowly: Leigh Bridges, Jeremy Diggle,
Hannah Jickling and Valerie Salez, Eleanor Morgan,
Nadia Myre, Denise Oleksijczuk, Demian Petryshyn, Jen Weih
March 20 to April 17, 2004

And speaking of Sisyphus, I am thinking of the impossibility of movement and Leopardi's *festina lente*, which upon first reading I translated as *party slowly*. I thought this to be extremely poetic and my social speed. However the correct translation is in fact "hurry slowly," which makes for a very different show. There are moments in film history, and I choose film for its study of movement in time, that articulate *festina lente* for me: The escape through the train window in Melville's *Le Cercle Rouge* on the hurry end of the spectrum. If the arrow points in the other direction, thinking on whole films, there is Bresson's *A Man Escaped*, most films made by Jacques Rivette, and in that spirit of long duration, *Je, Tu, Il, Elle* by Chantal Akerman, or even better her *Hotel Monterey*.

Each work in the exhibition "Hurry Slowly" somehow speaks directly to the title. Leigh Bridges' two small paintings, *Gig Gathering 1*, 2004 and *Gig Gathering 2*, 2004, snapshots in stature, in a palette of blue and black, subject figures at a party at what could be blue dawn or dusk. (For further reading on blue dawn see *d'Or: Explorations in Psychic Geography*, pp 34-35.)

Denise Oleksijczuk's pieces look at subtle pleas for time from the perspective of the ever so slightly guilty *flâneur*. Two colour photographs depict store hour signs modified to accommodate the owner's free time, e.g. a felt pen alters a noon Saturday opening to 12:30, and a hand cut vinyl "not" is awkwardly placed in front of a preexisting "open." These hang alongside a limited edition letterpress poster of and entitled *200 nouns*. Oleksijczuk inverts or displaces Richard Serra's *Verb List Compilation: Actions to Relate to Oneself*, 1967-1968. Her poem begins generously kerned with nouns: "Idler... foot dragger... moon-arounder..." As the nouns move towards the cinched mid-section, the spacing becomes tighter and the font size smaller,

“...no kinda human being...freeloader...” Towards the end, the nouns move back out into the wider font with a finale of “...thinker, ponderer, muse.”

In *International Space Station*, Demian

Petryshyn sits alone aboard his space station...just sitting there, on a nonplussed venture into the outer dimensions accompanied by the occasional space sound. Nadia Myre's sepia tinted *Portrait in Motion* features her quietly paddling a canoe of her own making across a misty lake. Jeremy Diggle's piece, a web-based historical fiction/narrative called *Salmon Fishing Woman*, is carried into the gallery by virtue of a ring, an object within the story, and hence a portal. Jen Weih's installation *Apollo Hall* is comprised of a red-lit Mylar salon/lobby with benches and waltzes slowed down to the point of creating a Lynch-like atmosphere. Eleanor Morgan's work features the urban animal kingdom: a squirrel buries a nut and pats the ground in a loop projected life size on the lower corner wall. A busy spider provides Morgan with her drawing material, web. Hannah Jickling and Valerie Salez's collaborative project

I'd Rather Be Snow Shoveling featured snow shoveling guerrilla performance-cum-snow sculpture in Dawson, Yukon as part of their residency at the KIAC, resulting in a grid of snapshots shown at the Or.

...a message of urgency obtained by dint of patient and meticulous adjustments and an intuition so instantaneous that, when formulated, it acquires the finality of something that could never have been otherwise. But it is also the rhythm of time that passes with no other aim than to let feelings and thoughts settle down, mature, and shed all impatience or ephemeral contingency.

— Italo Calvino, “Quickness”



Salmon Fishing Woman,
Jeremy Diggle

Line Interrupts Landscape

Lucy Pullen

Hurry Slowly: Hannah Jickling and Valerie Salez
March 20 to April 17, 2004

In the full pageantry of summer I am led to consider certain tools of the earth (snow and ice) as central to contemporary art production. It is mid-June. A brick enclosure made of ice melts over the course of the day.¹ I wish to isolate factors motivating sculptural production in relation to contemporary urban experience and the situationist *derivé*.

A *derivé* has one goal: that of being moved.

A happening is a plan made without preconceived idea of the outcome. Salient artists design projects around an excursion. *The Spiral Jetty*, 1970 is one such sculpture. As formal representation of Robert Smithson's thought, the notion of *The Spiral Jetty* originated in the landscape.²

One embarks on a Situationist *derivé* with only one goal or expectation: to destabilize habitual or psychogeographic patterns. The goal is to create instability and renewal. Situationist sculpture cultivates appreciation for lesser materials.³ Materials which endure, like bronze, are less interesting to use than ephemeral materials, like snow, because they more accurately describe the state of impermanence in which we live and reorganize a tired regime for ascribing cultural value.

To destabilize and renew local social contracts, Valerie Salez and Hannah Jickling carve designs into winter lawns and sidewalks with shoveled snow. An artwork encircles a municipal duty. At best, the connection between direct action and cultural production is articulated. Their project could be construed as glib or lightweight if it were not so thorough. Sixteen pairs of fridge magnets deploy before and after images of their project: enough to cover the door of my freezer and deftly construct a visual pun, a play on materials.

Artistic responses to urban planning construe a vital terrain. The snow shoveling project of Salez and Jickling is an asynchronous collaboration. Asynchronous collaboration is both social and remote: people work on individual projects in a protracted relationship to one another. Between Dawson



I'd Rather be Snow Shoveling, Hannah Jickling and Valerie Salez

City and Toronto, Salez and Jickling's asynchronous collaboration counters isolation while supporting the independent trajectory of each contributor. Their relationship places proximity over geography.

Dawson is Canada's Cuba. The Canadian North is bound to be avant-garde because it is the frontier. The frontier is the ideal site for interrogating proximity over geography. It is a timeless theme visited by Buster Keaton in his film *The Frozen North*, 1922, and re-visited by Martin Kippenberger whose 1995 sculpture of a timber-framed underground subway station⁴ regularly dumbfounds citizens on their way in or out of town.

If situationist sculpture exists, it is through unlikely pairings of transitory materials. Natural agents, snow and ice are used to formulate propositions for marking time. Photographs record events which are better experienced in person, like you would experience a sculpture. Herein lies a seminal difficulty. Such celebratory humility relies on deft choices of Smithson's issue: a generation of artists seeking to construct the evolution of an absolute category.

1. "To mark the opening of Art Unlimited in Basle, Allan Kaprow's Happening FLUIDS (was) reinvented for the first time since 1967 by an international workshop, in cooperation with the Department of Art and Design at Basle's University of Applied Sciences and the University Basle." Hauser and Wirth Gallery, press release, September 2005.

2. In his essay entitled "The Spiral Jetty" Smithson writes, "I thought about making an island with the help of boats and barges, but in the end let the site determine what I would build." Robert Smithson, *The Writings of Robert Smithson*, ed. Nancy Holt. New York University Press: 1979, p 111.

3. "There cannot be a situationist art, but only a situationist use of art, which involves its depreciation." Nicolas Bourriaud, *Postproduction*, trans. Jeanine Herman. New York: Lukas & Sternberg, 2002, p 31.

4. Martin Kippenberger, Metro-Net World Connection Exit of the Underground Station Dawson City West, 1995. Dawson City, Yukon Territory, Canada.



Portrait in Motion, video stills, Nadia Myre

Nadia Myre's Portrait in Motion

Daina Warren

edited by Marcia Crosby

Hurry Slowly: Nadia Myre

March 20 to April 17, 2004

Nadia Myre bases a large amount of her artwork on her identity. Being of Algonquin (Kitigan Zibi Anishnabeg) and French descent, she explores her cultural background through a process of critical thinking and memory, constructing art objects that interact between the two. At the same time, she deconstructs the overall Canadian socio-political culture and examines how Aboriginal peoples are represented within that framework.

Nadia's *Portrait in Motion* is a two-and-a-half minute sepia toned film documenting one of her performances. The artist slowly paddles toward the camera through mist and sun, on calm in an almost soundless setting—except the atmospheric noise of birds and the watery environment. Myre had created the canoe for another project, titled *A History in Two Parts*. It is fourteen feet by four feet by three feet. One half of it is constructed out of traditional materials: birch bark, cedar, ash, spruce root, and gum. The other half is assembled out of aluminum, a “modern” material. For *Portrait in Motion*, it is an object, a vessel with which to navigate her experience. She moves, and moves with the two halves of what she carries within herself, around herself. Yet the form is also a reference for how the Algonquin and the French historically met. The traditionally processed side of the canoe is the history of the Algonquin influence on the French. As an extended metaphor, the canoe with its natural materials signifies how First Nations peoples supported the newcomers in and on a land that was so foreign to them. The aluminum side signifies the evolution our vessel has endured since that first meeting of nations and what it stands for now, a form for tourist recreation.

The symbol of melded birch bark and metal initiates thoughts about First Peoples, our ancestors, and our history, carrying the memory of our survival for thousands of years, the preservation of traditional knowledge, and how we as Aboriginal people need to retain and nurture the unassimilated

parts of our culture. But there is another aspect to the combination of traditional and modern materials, with the aluminum half referencing our culture and adaptability since colonization, and the many new directions that have happened to our ancestors. Fog as a metaphor perpetuates that concept (not being able to clearly see a direction, a mysterious setting), however, when the artist emerges from the fog she does not exemplify a feeling of confusion, she is calmly finding her way, showing herself briefly before returning into the misty waterscape.

Demian Petryshyn

Dan Starling

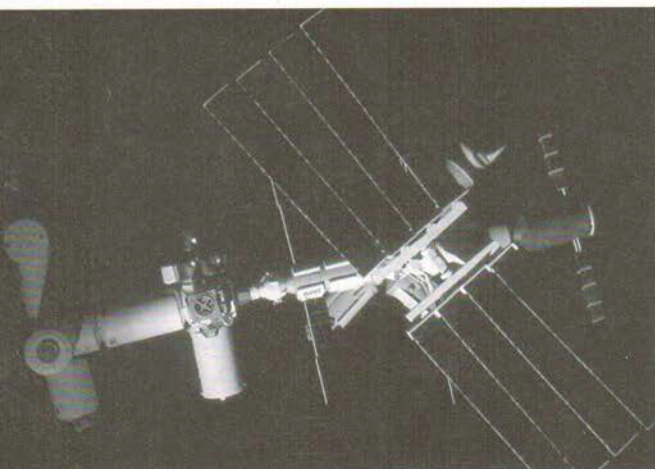
Hurry Slowly: Demian Petryshyn

March 20 to April 17, 2004

Demian Petryshyn's work is a strategic document of desire and its effects. He uses popular references from video games and movies to question the desires that drive individual action. What is particular about Petryshyn's work is that it does not rally against such outlets or sardonically suggest counter examples. *International Space Station*, 2004, a video shown in the exhibition "Hurry Slowly" at the Or Gallery, evokes questions of masculinity while examining the notion of a decisive moment. It acknowledges the incapacitation of action in a culture that is driven by ridiculous responses to its history, and chooses to address the fluctuating boredom and contemplation in such a context. Despite the fact that the work uses a blend of artistic practices, research methods, and historical references, one can't help but admit that it denies any predictive critical response. The construction of the International Space Station, the chosen setting for Petryshyn's project, was the result of post-cold war collaboration between Canada, Japan, Brazil, Russia, the European Space Agency, and the United States. It represented cooperation between world powers; this arrangement was unthinkable only two decades ago. The 356 foot long station is manned by a three-person crew and includes six state-of-the-art scientific laboratories.¹

Petryshyn's video begins with a model of the International Space Station hanging against a black backdrop. After an abrupt cut, the viewer is faced with an astronaut, played by Petryshyn himself. The figure is sitting in an empty, hexagonal white room with fluorescent lighting; the setting perfectly imitates a classic space station. Wearing a blue jumpsuit, the young, Slavic-looking astronaut is stationary save for the blink of an eye.

The video can be seen as a laconic example of a contemporary conceptual art practice. It shares with its predecessors from conceptual art the concerns of performance, endurance, and documentation of the artist at work. These



(top, middle) *International Space Station*, video stills, Demian Petryshyn
(bottom) *International Space Station*, production image, Demian Petryshyn

concerns are exemplified by Bruce Nauman's studio videos. In response to these works, the viewer is meant to spend time in contemplation of the art idea and not to be overwhelmed by action or detail.² *International Space Station* also integrates ideas of play emphasized in the work of artists Martin Kippenberger and Fischli and Weiss. The white space shuttle, on close inspection, is haphazardly screwed together pieces of particleboard. Like these artists, Petryshyn is concerned with testing the limits of artistic responsibility within an imaginary or creative domain. What is surprisingly missing from Petryshyn's work is both the straight-faced discovery of Nauman and the sardonic cynicism of Kippenberger. Petryshyn does not propose artistic redemption in the aestheticized object. He also does not demand that his audience follow him to any uncomfortable position through coercive action.

This work speaks of a more general condition of societal passivity and irresponsibility. In this controlled situation, the astronaut has no buttons to press and no foreseeable actions to perform. It is as if the artist had gone to the trouble of creating a situation in which he has no duty. This strategic placement of a masculine subject questions ideas of control and action associated with a traditional idea of male gender. In popular culture, the male's responsibility for action is formed in adolescence through video games and reinforced by heroic role models. In the video, Petryshyn is not controlled, nor is he in control. Petryshyn has delivered his audience to the point of inquiry, but suggests no suitable resolution for the interpretation of the work's meaning.

The sparse room, the sense of boredom, and the lack of commitment to a task, leave the viewer with unexpected feelings of anxiety. Cultural thinkers have for some time lamented the lack of public interest in significant events that affect the world on a global scale. The *International Space Station* has yet to receive widespread public interest. Even in popular science fiction, such as the *Star Wars* movies, the public response is largely apathetic due to poor scriptwriting and acting. The only point of agreement among theorists and cultural critics is that people have become absorbed by distractions and fragmented into special interest groups. Under the influence of economics, the idea of the public good has been hijacked by

the idea of the importance of the individual. John Ralston Saul stresses that marks have been left on our society by "passivity and conformity in those areas which matter and non-conformism in those which don't."³ We are in a state of suspended political action. The cold war and the decades spent in a race of cultural superiority are seen as ancient history. The opposition of two powerful nation-states, once a stable point of hegemonic opposition, has dissolved. For Terry Eagleton, even a sense of individualism itself is suspect: "you can no longer have bohemian rebels or revolutionary avant-gardes because they no longer have anything to blow-up."⁴

Individual interest, in the period of male identity formation from adolescence to adulthood, is a positive, driving force behind the work of Demian Petryshyn. He is interested in questions of masculinity and how these issues are discussed in the public realm. He does not waste time trying to dispel the myth of the male gender. Instead he relies upon the viewer's deferred and defunct process of decision making to fundamentally question desire, and the place where desire becomes anxiety. Desire is spurred on by our belief in those ideologies that give us our sense of freedom and autonomy.

Petryshyn coyly introduces, if one happens upon it, one sequence in which the astronaut appears in his underwear. This humorous interpellation of the loop is a reward for the dedicated or lucky viewer. It seems that Petryshyn is at once alleviating these anxieties and calling attention to their suppressed and underdeveloped expressions. The trouble is that we, as willing and waiting consumers, are just satisfied enough.

1. The International Space Station Overview, http://www.shuttlepresskit.com/ISS_OVR/ (accessed May 24, 2005).

2. Lucy R. Lippard and John Chandler, "The Dematerialization of Art," *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Alexander Alberro and Blake Smithson. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999, p 46-47.

3. John Ralston Saul, *The Unconscious Civilization*. Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 1995, p 2.

4. Terry Eagleton, *After Theory*. New York: Basic Books, 2003, p 18.

Just Passing Through: Jen Weih's *Apollo Hall*

Adair Rounthwaite

Hurry Slowly: Jen Weih

March 20 to April 17, 2004

In the city, condos are in a never-ending process of being built. They punch upwards into the sky, claiming it for human habitation and commerce, carving a sellable product out of thin air. Every day in Vancouver, in different areas of the city ranging from recently developed suburbs to newly gentrified parts of the downtown core, thousands of people drain in and out of these buildings through countless lobbies. Often lavishly decorated in order to reference absent modernist grandeur, lobbies are spaces that we walk through, or sometimes wait in for a few minutes, but rarely stop in. They offer us no amenities except maybe a place to sit down; they are transitional spaces, whose uselessness propels us out through simple lack of a reason to stay.

Jen Weih's *Apollo Hall*, 2004, uses the antechamber exhibition space of the Or Gallery to create a lobby that acts both as a prelude to the main space of the gallery, and as a work in and of itself. Through the use of sound, lighting, furniture, and flat sculptural elements adorning the walls, Weih creates an atmosphere that examines issues of architectural space, amusement, and social control across a number of different historical and theoretical terrains. Upon entering the room, the viewer encounters a lobby space lit only in a red light omitted by cone-shaped fixtures on the ceiling that are somewhat reminiscent of heat lamps. Narrow, inhospitable benches with silver upholstery are placed against two walls. Behind the benches, long strips of reflective Mylar hang vertically, reflecting back a distorted image of the onlooking viewer. On the wall opposite the door are the silver outlines of what appear to be two elevator doors.

Most of all, the space is dominated by an audio track made up of an old record of Austrian waltzes played manually and very slowly on a turntable. But this is almost impossible to discern without reading or being told about the origin of the sounds, and the initial impression is more one of slowed-down traffic noises which pulse and hum, creating

a sense of continual movement. The trajectory by which viewers are propelled out of the space as soon as they enter is reinforced by the feeling of claustrophobia caused by the red light and the reflective strips on the walls. The lighting and elevator outlines combine for an almost comic "elevator to hell" effect, but if there's any hell that the piece evokes, it's less one of moral absolutes than of Camus' *No Exit*: a space in which it is impossible to stay, and equally impossible to leave. Noticeably disconcerting but not quite repellant enough to be abject, Weih's lobby holds viewers in a liminal space where their own subjecthood is called into question.

In addition to the way the installation deals with contemporary urban architectural spaces and how they shape the behavior of the city's inhabitants, the use of the waltzes in the soundtrack links to a whole other set of historical references that continue the exploration of issues of social control in the context of evolving popular culture. Originally danced by peasants in Austria and Bavaria, the waltz was played in the Hapsburg court by the seventeenth century, and became a Europe-wide craze by the nineteenth, perhaps due to the fact that it was the first dance that allowed the nobility to hold each other closely instead of merely linking arms. Johann Strauss, one of the most successful composers of the waltz, was referred to as the Austrian Napoleon, and a Strauss biographer once stated that "the waltz saved Vienna from a revolution," emphasizing the role it played in "conquering" people's heart and minds, and distracting them from social and political issues. Simultaneously, the history of the waltz is a site of transgression of social boundaries; its popularity encompassed numerous classes, it was universally viewed by religious leaders as vulgar and sinful, and nobility would often disguise themselves in order to attend the Viennese dance halls.¹ This ambivalent history parallels Bakhtin's discussion of the way in which the carnival simultaneously permits a bending and inversion of social categories, and serves to reinforce the existing order of domination through providing a temporary illusion of liberation from its codes.² Despite the presence of carnivalesque elements in Weih's installation like the unusual lighting, and the strips of Mylar which evoke funhouse mirrors with their distorted reflections,

the overall effect is not one of fun or amusement. The result is a sort of aborted carnivalesque, in which the joyful aspects of the carnival melt away to reveal its underlying motivation of sinister control.

With its widespread mixture of historical and theoretical references, *Apollo Hall* initially seems to demonstrate the type of anachronistic historical approach described by Walter Benjamin in the introduction to his *Arcades Project*, where he states that:

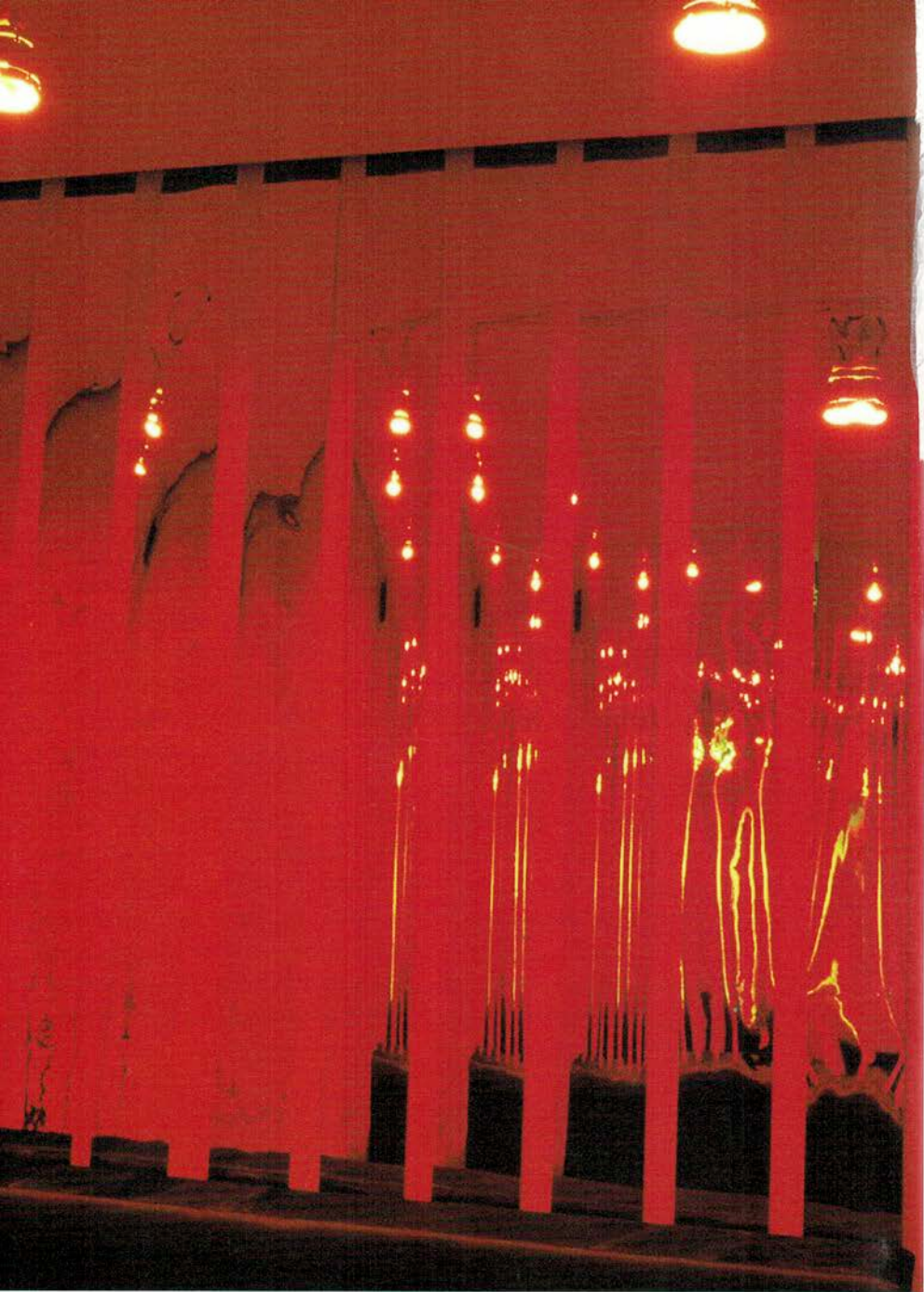
[t]he subject of this book is an illusion expressed by Schopenhauer in the following formula: to seize the essence of history, it suffices to compare Herodotus and the morning newspaper. [This attitude]...corresponds to a viewpoint according to which the course of the world is an endless series of facts congealed in the form of things. ...The riches thus amassed in the aerarium of civilization henceforth appear as though identified for all time. This conception of history minimizes the fact that such riches owe not only their existence but also their transmission to a constant effort of society – an effort, moreover, by which these riches are strangely altered.³

However, the ultimate effect of Weih's installation is not to make universalizing judgments about historical processes, but to emphasize the fact that the spaces we pass through briefly and take for granted are the result of conscious choices, and have been so over an extended period of time. The specific choices made by Weih in creating the installation become a metaphor for the way in which seemingly insignificant spaces are engineered in order to interpellate subjects in a specific way that often remains invisible unless we draw our attention to it. Serving as an intermediary between the city and the main space of the Or and affecting our experiences of both, *Apollo Hall* conducts us into the gallery with a heightened awareness of its white walls and impeccably invisible lighting, and then back into the urban fabric with an altered perception of how it alters us.

1. Austrian Press and Information Service, <http://www.austria.org/oldsite/spr97/waltz.htm> (accessed August 7, 2005; page now discontinued).

2. Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky. Cambridge and London: M.I.T. Press, 1968, pp 74-75.

3. Walter Benjamin, "Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century," *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin. Cambridge and London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999, p 14.



Apollo Hall, installation, Jen Wei

Whatever you do, don't get caught.

I don't have any money.

I'm going to spend it all.

Good country, Canada.

Don't bring home any bundles.

Play the shit for him.

You'd better watch yourself or
you'll be sucking the hind tit.



The Future is Now, installation, Holly Ward

The Future is Now: Some Thoughts on Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow

J.A. Gaitán and Corin Sworn

The Future is Now: Holly Ward
May 1 to May 29, 2004

Generally, science fiction finds the present disappointing yet it differs from utopianism in that it is equally suspicious of the future. In science fiction the future is but the horizon towards which the present is carrying itself, so that it (the future) can only appear to us as an inflated present. The humility of science fiction lies not in its desire to change the present (if anything, it usually tries to speed it up), but in its reliance on prophetic speech. Far from pretending to change the world, science fiction listens and observes so as to provide us with a believable image of the future—a future that we can only know through science and in which science will have overcome Man, which is its only limitation. This has been the theme of many science fiction novels and films.

For a brief moment in the 1950s, science fiction seemed to have taken to the streets where inconceivable technologies were suddenly treated as commonplace. This treatment manifested itself in what one could call “The Space-Age Aesthetic,” which has become historical and now bears the aftertaste of the atomic era. This impression of the future cannot seem to us but outdated and inadequate, let alone incompetent. This colloquial aesthetic reconfigured Main Street USA as the “the world of yesterday, tomorrow, and fantasy,” refurbishing Middle America as it cleared out all and any signs of a “past.” It is thus as much a sign of suburbia as the Caterpillar and the lawn mower. These were also the glory days of vacuum cleaners, toasters, and rocket motifs, as well as the birth of popular astrology—the paraphernalia of a new scientific euphoria that “mushroomed” along with the suburb, making it the quintessential site where the image of a technologically sound nation could be staged. Just what is it that makes this world of yesterday so different, so appealing?

The spatial economy of International Style architecture (as spearheaded by, for example, Neutra and Schindler)



The Future is Now, installation, Holly Ward

had "Man" as its centre, and design as the technology for the management and optimization of everyday life. In this sense (but not in others), it differed little from the Vitruvian tradition that Le Corbusier revived in his "Modulor." A space-age aesthetic would, on the other hand, dispose of such Cartesian organizing principles, perhaps finding them too cumbersome for the actualization of its fantastical present. This could be construed as a confrontation between "man" and the astronaut, where the equation in the golden mean was no longer "man in the world" but "man in space." This post-atomic retreat into fantasy created a living environment that rendered the technological future benign, with cosmic hotels, animated TV specials, winged cars, atomic bowling lanes, and a wide range of out-of-this-world advertisements as additional softeners. Future-inspired designs proliferated, resulting in a combination of bad taste (strangely ascribed to the middle class home, as if *it* had created what it was to consume) and unsound engineering which paved the way for "planned obsolescence." Today the signs of "our times" surely don't coincide with what was anticipated half a century ago, yet the signs of that past do survive as objects, and they can elicit feelings of nostalgia (although they can be a nuisance if one requires them to perform their original function). More significantly, their existence in our present is not only out-of-sync with the imaginary future they represent or represented, it is also *out of order*. In *their* version of our present they would have been long gone, making "planned obsolescence" seem but a natural development from the ideological scheme they form a part of. The abundance expressed through gasoline-powered machines (such as V8 engines and lawn mowers), was intolerant of the austere design brought over by International Style architects. This was in part because there was no need or even desire to rationalise space—at least in California, home of the "New American Century" and the first modern city (Los Angeles) to do away with urban planning—but also because the austerity expressed in, for example, the Neutra house was also unaccommodating to an increasingly monumental scale and profusion of household objects. And while modernist homes came with a more or less prescribed idea of the kinds of objects that could inhabit them, a panorama of consumer products demanded more flexible living spaces, that were less expensive and at the same time easy to "reprogram" or "update" at regular intervals.

Thus the objects that filled the landscape of the "New America" during the 1950s and 1960s are not only examples of a certain idiosyncrasy whose slogan could be said to have been, "If NASA could put it in space, the neighbour could put it in the back yard." These objects were also vehicles through which the future could be imagined, a future that had no tolerance for them. Meanwhile, the Neutra and the Schindler houses were designed for a present, or perhaps for a more realistic future, with a politics of design that could not have possibly anticipated *our* present (let alone their present prices), but which did much better at anticipating a crisis in spatial economy. While this type of architecture can be held accountable for its refusal to acknowledge "cultural specificities," it could be said to have fared well at least *vis-à-vis* the cultural specificities of the 1950s and 1960s "New America." Streamline aesthetics—the most uncanny example of which may be the Futuro home—treat everything with the same disrespect that the space-age aesthetic did: incapable of recognising differences in everyday life, it turns everything over to a mindless repetition.

This is the not-yet-entirely-historical landscape that Holly Ward's *The Future is Now* makes reference to by way of assemblages that bring together the ideals of the time with their miserable persistence in our present. Her work examines our disappointment with old notions of progress and conversely our nostalgia for the beliefs we held in them. *The Future is Now* is comprised of a series of modular panels arranged to form an octagonal passage with three entrances. Where the outside of the panels are roughly hewn, with the signs of their construction (metal supports, wires, and fasteners) left exposed, the inside of the panels display smooth, white, undulating surfaces reminiscent of space-age architecture. Ward's structure is part sound chamber, part orgone energy machine: the panels contain embedded contact microphones and speakers that collect, amplify, and re-emit the sounds of our passage through the configured space. Our movement, reproduced as sound, ricochets through the modular units away from us, and fades away. It is an abstraction of our experience, the present reformulated into the past.

Criminal

Mark Soo

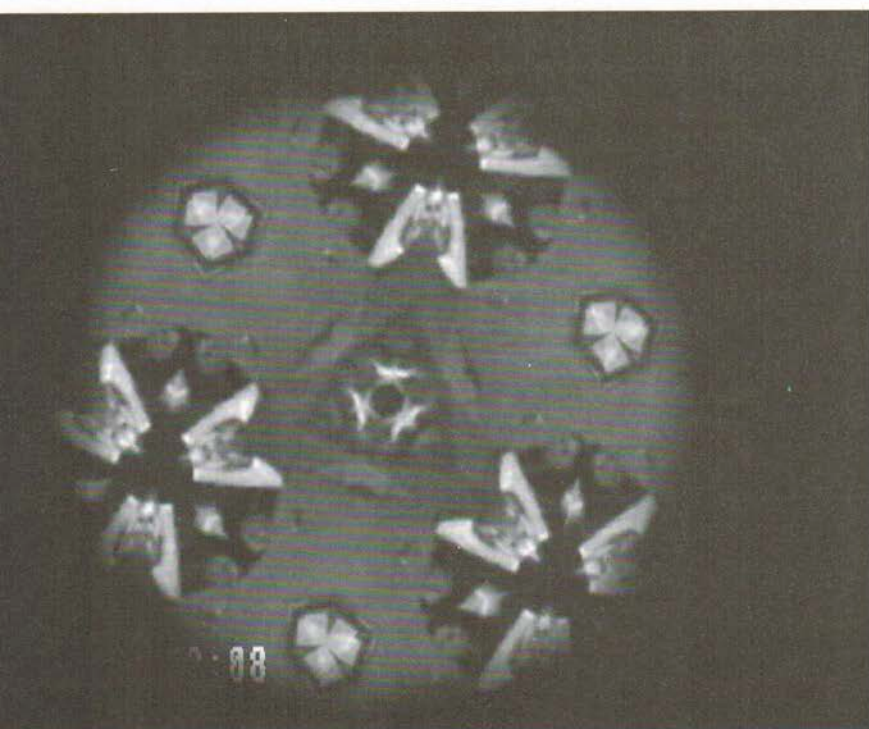
Hold Up: Dani Gal
May 1 to May 29, 2004

Despite its reputation as a mild and easygoing city, Vancouver holds the dubious honor of being the bank robbery capital of Canada. Easily eclipsing every other Canadian metropolitan centre, the city saw more than one heist per day in November 2004 alone. While never having had the misfortune to bear such menacing circumstances, the Or Gallery has not been immune to theft and robbery, and fortunately most crimes have tended toward the bizarre, comic or simply bothersome.

Among the more noteworthy thefts at the Or in recent memory was the unusual and still unresolved disappearance of a Volkswagen Beetle used for an exhibition. Acquired for a performance guest curated by Jesus Fuenmeyer in 2000, this scrap-of-a-vehicle was bought without an engine and then towed to the gallery, coming to rest in the parking lot adjacent to the Or. What was remarkable was that a few days after the performance, while still parked on the lot, the car disappeared—stolen with neither a trace nor a witness. With its indeterminate motives, the incongruity of this strange crime spurred an inconclusive investigation and garnered an honorable mention on the local news. Despite this effort, the car still remains elusive.

Dani Gal's video projection *Hold Up*, exhibited at the Or in 2005, depicts surveillance footage of a bank robbery, fragmented through a kaleidoscopic video effect into a hundred mesmerizing shards of scintillating black and white shapes. Dancing in a constellation of abstracted forms that conjure the perceptual destabilizations of psychedelia, Gal combines the childlike enchantment of kaleidoscopic vision with the equally familiar visual spectacle of a robbery captured on video, bringing together the seemingly disparate worlds of abstraction with the documentary in a work that continually flits back and forth between both modes of representation.

Found ubiquitously in areas much like the one in Gal's video, surveillance cameras are typically installed near

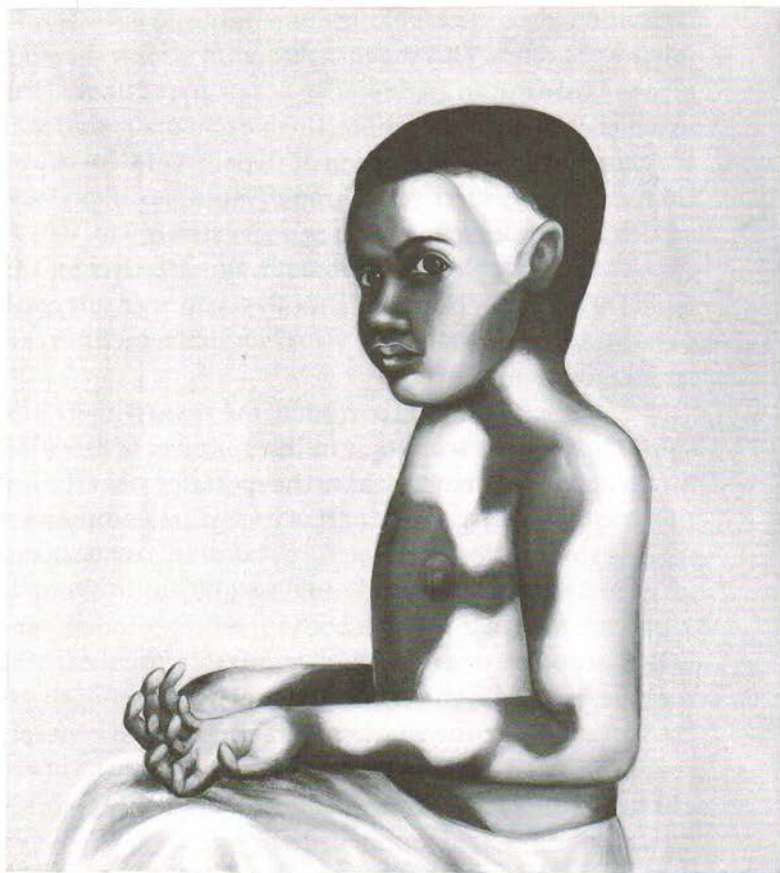


Hold Up, video stills, Dani Gal

the ceiling in a corner looking downward and outward, or in the middle of a room. This topographic point of view is designed to give as expansive an angle and as clear a line of sight of the space in which it surveys as possible. Unable to remain hidden from the camera, total apprehension of all points of view—whether from a single perspective or through multiple cameras seen on security monitors—remains its primary strategy for deterring criminal activity. Noticeably though, any effectiveness this model of authority bears on crime has been arguably eroded, in part due to the osmosis of its visual vocabulary within the popular imagination.

Standing in front of the video with its image spinning off into a seemingly infinite number of directions, it might not be altogether clear to the spectator what the source of the kaleidoscope is. A large part of its aesthetic amusement is the intense atomization of the picture plane into composite parts, giving each new subdivision equal weight within a complex geometric matrix. Although both surveillance footage and the kaleidoscope are immediately recognizable visual experiences, the kaleidoscope is an instrument of playful confusion while the surveillance camera orders and simplifies our conception of space. Mapping this logic onto the whimsical model of vision offered by the kaleidoscope, Gal makes a charming worldview of crystalline refraction commensurate with the crude yet sobering depiction of criminal threat, and parallels the kaleidoscope's characteristic projection of the image from multiple points of view with the surveillance camera's panopticonic ambition to observe all things within a given space.

Only at the end of the short video loop when the film rewinds itself can it be explicitly deciphered that each spinning shard was composed of the footage of a robbery in progress. Revealing the hooded perpetrator walking towards the counter, taut arm outstretched and gripping a gun, this acute realization fractures any sense the spectator might have of aesthetic wonderment, trading juvenile delight with social anxiety. Like the theft of the Or Gallery's Volkswagen Beetle, Gal's video does not resolve easily. But whereas the Beetle becomes an enigmatic loss more than a seriously damaging or traumatic one, *Hold Up* leaves the spectator oscillating between amusement and the discomfort of a sobering moment of clarity.



Untitled, Shary Boyle

Shary Boyle's Companions

Liz Bruchet

Companions: Shary Boyle

June 4 to July 3, 2004

A small portrait introduces Shary Boyle's exhibition "Companions." The subject lies shirtless with his head against a pillow and looks to be in his early teens. He does not meet the viewer's, nor the artist's, gaze, but instead occupies himself with a book. His casual pose begs the question, what kind of companion is he—engrossed or distracted? And so we begin our own inevitable process of reading: the book might become a diary, the young man a lover, and ourselves a companion.

The ten portraits that make up the exhibition expand this line of questioning, moving from the literal to the metaphorical. An elderly woman confronts the viewer's stare, her neck aggressively twisted to reveal sagging skin, as if her head and body no longer match. A young girl with curly red hair (a likely subject of carrot-top taunts) holds her hands up to hide her body. She is covered in spots—freckles, or maybe a rash. An old man with stark white hair and spotted beard, uneven eyes, and a sickly red nose, shows the marks of alcohol abuse or fibs told. Physical anomalies benign enough to suggest normalcy at the same time trigger associations with psychosis, contamination, or self-destruction.

Hands figure predominantly; they are bound, severed, held open, ready to receive, clench, or claw, to protect, harm, or welcome. Stripped to their underwear, Boyle's subjects seem to have been woken from a dream. Or perhaps they seek asylum from insomnia, and we have arrived unannounced through the backdoor. They appear wearing little but their own skin; although they have been granted centre stage, they come bearing only coats of alienation.

We might assume these characters give face to some nightmarish visions permeating the artist's mind. Given Boyle's previous work in the form of autobiographical narratives the suggestion that these portraits represent facets of her own reality should come as no surprise. Her book works, with titles such as *I Feel Funny Mommy*, 1998 and *Witness My Shame*, 1999 are

comprised of loose sketches, drawings, and watercolours depicting adolescent angst and the pangs of sexuality, drug use, and bullying. As if drawn for a subverted children's book or sex ed textbook, their narratives warn of the perils of adulthood that invariably worm their way into the imagination. Yet the descriptor "companions" softens the sense of threat. It lends the subjects familiarity, as if to suggest they might also be sidekicks, comrades, or even guides that have come to life from the sequestered pages of a diary. Their presence seems to be, if not consented to, at least acknowledged as a part of a partnership, like those necessitated by childhood or senility.

The word "portrait" is an equally weighty proposition, encompassing the form's ambitious reach from its literal or didactic origins as a spiritual or social marker (both coded and explicit), to its function as a kind of psychological map, a portrait of the mind. Readings of and writings on portraiture continually rely on the form's dubious relationship to reality. They prompt us to look for clues within the sitter's countenance or accoutrements, that might reconcile the dichotomy of the external/physiological and internal/psychological. Yet in attempting to capture the psychological, we stray away from reality and its likeness, towards those subtleties that elude reproduction. If portraiture seeks to invoke identity—to make visible the surreal nature of human presence—it does so through a persistent oscillation between reality and fiction.

The contradictory impulse to discern a likeness *and* define an individual's unique characteristics haunts each of Boyle's images; her depictions garner their strength through their uneasy combination of technical attention and psychological rawness. In a significant departure from her earlier practice, Boyle has set herself the task of painting in the manner of the European masters, in which paint is painstakingly built-up through a layering of glazes. No longer representing transient moments or hidden recollections, the resulting portraits ease their subjects out of the closet, offering them presence and permanence. Executed within the parameters of formal pictorial traditions, they are granted dignity—a distinction arising not from their social status or a trick of the painter's hand, but rather integrity unearthed through the slow labour of investigation, of drawing forth.

Indeed, the word portrait has its roots in the verb *to portray*, to call forth. We might recall the paintings of Velázquez, the Spanish court painter of Philip IV, whose portraits were lauded for their realism, even at the risk of rendering the sitter in an unflattering light. According to the poet Francisco de Quevedo (1580-1645), Velázquez's portraits succeed through their portrayal of truth, rather than likeness.¹ It's a slippery but resonant distinction: to take into account the imagined, which can be felt and realized within its own distinct parameters, truth must sit somewhere beyond the simple division of reality and fiction.

Boyle's brand of wary, qualified romanticism strikes me as reflective of a contemporary, perhaps even a generational, manifestation of the drive to achieve truth over likeness. The exploration of the human psyche is well-worn territory, to the extent that we can no longer be surprised at what is uncovered. We all have our companions of loneliness, those scars of the mind. Discussions of human neurosis have become so commonplace as to render them passé, boring, and in many ways, passable. And in the place of estrangement, we have come to walk a fine line between self-censorship and self-exposure, seeking on the one hand to purge (and indeed celebrate) through acknowledgement, but on the other hand to withhold in self-defense. This, I would argue, is the frame in which Boyle's companions stand. They hover somewhere next to the cachet of being a loser, and the bumps, bruises, and perversions that result, but just shy of the privileged position of the artist, whose task it is to first tangle life's practicalities only to then wrangle them into a point of insight.

It is fitting territory for an artist who situates her work outside the discourses of contemporary art, who tucks herself away in forest cabins and foreign cities. Despite her external positioning, Boyle's practice forms part of a larger return to figuration, a renewed exploration of the craftsmanship of art forms and the introverted process of investigation they demand. It is a shape of art engaged in a contemporary and very sincere pull towards wonder and intuition, and, as might be expected, a healthy dose of madness.

¹ Enriqueta Harris, *Velázquez*. New York: Cornell University Press, 1982, p 115.



Rhonda Wepler and Trevor Mahovsky, Rhonda Wepler and Trevor Mahovsky

Rhonda Weppler and Trevor Mahovsky

Robyn Laba

Rhonda Weppler and Trevor Mahovsky:

Rhonda Weppler and Trevor Mahovsky

September 9 through October 2, 2004

Rhonda Weppler and Trevor Mahovsky's show at the Or Gallery in 2004 consisted of three works; *can (dented)*, a small sculpture displayed on a narrow plinth in the entrance gallery, and two large sculptures resting on the floor of the main gallery space, *Ford Escort II* and *Ford Escort III*. All three works emphasize semblance, that is, the outward appearance of something, and its relationship to what may or may not exist underneath (whether "underneath" is taken literally or as indicative of inner meaning which is all the more important for being concealed).

As an object, *can (dented)* conforms in shape and scale to an identifiable model: a common aluminum container for any number of products found in homes or hardware stores, such as paint thinner or motor oil. The sculpture is a composite of two simple geometric forms, a vertically oriented, rectangular block topped by a small cylinder, both made of wood and painted with multiple coats of evenly applied silver paint. The "dent" consists of a series of chiseled gouges cut into two sides of the object forming an acute angle a few centimetres deep. While the cut disrupts the object's smooth surface, it also registers as surface since it is covered by the silver paint in the same uniform way. The gouges themselves haven't been sanded down or otherwise altered to foster any illusion of metal; rather their texture betrays the nature of the actual material underneath the layers of paint, and registers the process of fabrication. This play with surface and interior is reflected in the sculpture's title, that is, *can*: generic container, designed for practical utility, as well as hermetically sealed environment designed to protect its contents from outside contamination; and *(dented)*: a surface impression made by the impact of repeated use or blunt force, as well as, figuratively speaking, the ability to have an effect on, signaling the beginning stages of a process of getting at "something more." Sitting atop a plinth, the work asks, in

mocking fashion, to be read as more than a generic replica, suggesting instead that it be imbued with the cultural authority demanded by tradition.

Ford Escort II and *III* are each sculptures made from an aluminum foil cast of the same car: a 1989 Ford Escort two-door hatchback. Each cast consists of sections of foil that have been directly molded to the exterior of the car's main body, bumpers, tires, and mirrors, then lifted off and glued together while draped over a temporary armature (not exactly the Fordist assembly line; perhaps there's a joke in here about the shift to flexible production models). The sculptures rest on the gallery floor parallel to each other as collapsed, hulking shells, falling in on themselves under the burden of their own weight. The shape of each piece is determined in part by the proportions of the original object and in part by the effects of gravity on the large stretches of lightweight foil that are without any underlying support. Over time, as the thin foil tires splay, more of each work comes into contact with the ground, flattening out, coming closer to the world of "ordinary things." Gravity's impact continues over the course of the exhibition, observable in the subtly evolving form of each sculpture over the period of time that the works are on display. The presence of spectators, either individually or in groups, walking around each work with varying degrees of attention, breathing, stepping, waving, and occasionally tripping over it, precipitates further surrender. Sculptural elements such as tension, weight, and balance are thrown out of equilibrium while elements of time and the spectator's presence become more active components of the work's formation. The result is that while both sculptures may be cast from the same object, chance dictates that they look similar, but not the same.

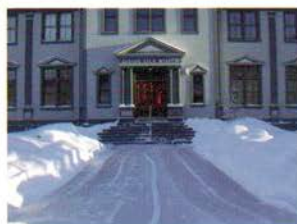
The technique of foil casting takes impressions that register general contours while preserving a modest amount of detail particular to the texture of the original object, such as the raised letters of the tires and license plate. This specificity is highlighted in each sculpture's title (product specificity, as opposed to the generic label "car"). The process also registers the fact of the foil's manual manipulation; even minimal handling wrecks the pristine

look of the foil's smooth surface. Both of these aspects of the work encourage looking up close at the object in order to identify, in amongst the mass of uniform silver, features unique to the car and the numerous reflecting planes of foil that give the sculptures their surface lustre. It's when looking up close that one remembers cars are essentially containers; as spectators we're accustomed not only to looking at cars but into them, literally (through their windows) and symbolically (typically as signs of individual power, freedom, and the promise of technological ingenuity). In the *Ford Escort* sculptures both of these tendencies are subverted; spectators hover around the caved-in, "wrecked" cars, looking at the impressions in the foil left by the glass and metal of the driver and passenger windows, seeing through to nothing—aluminum foil is, after all, meant to act as a barrier, to retain either heat or cold, or keep out air and light. (Some believe it can even prevent mind-reading.) And the evident delicacy with which each sculpture has been assembled, the fragility of the foil heap on the floor falling in on itself, provokes feelings of impermanence and melancholy rather than bold confidence or trust in the durability of the things of the world.

Looking back and forth between the individual works, we're encouraged to question what it is we're supposed to be thinking about: the process of fabrication, the presence of surface material, the absent original objects, imaginary contents, or interiors. Unlike the foil casts, the answers don't settle, defying the gravity of the question.



can (dented),
Rhonda Weppeler and Trevor Mahovsky



I'd Rather be Snow Shoveling, Hannah Jickling and Valerie Salez



Untitled, Shary Boyle



Untitled, installation, Ron Terada

THANK YOU.
I DON'T WANT
YOUR PITY.

IF WE ARE NOT
OUR BROTHER'S
KEEPER AT LEAST
LET US NOT BE HIS
EXECUTIONER

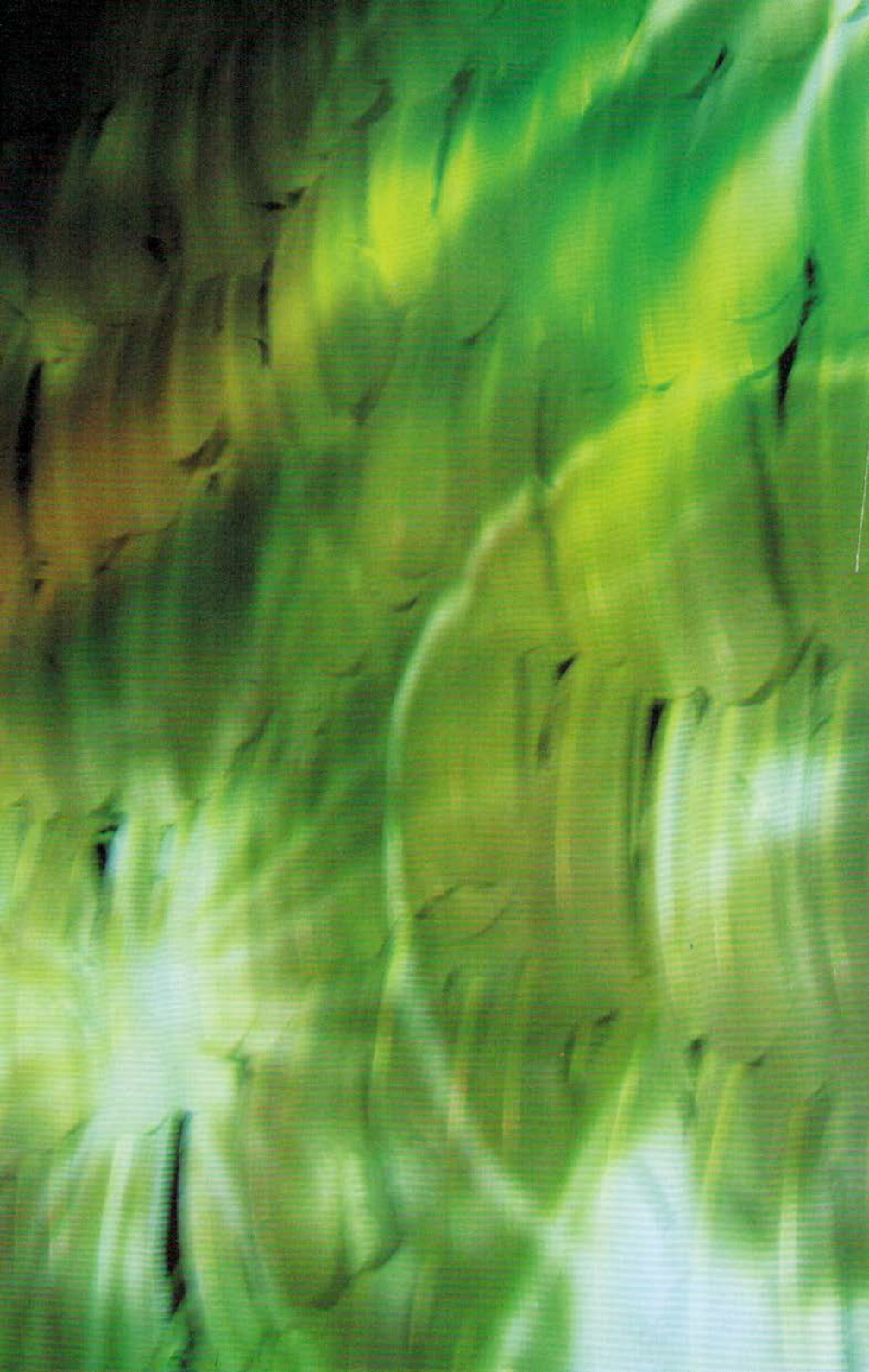
I LOVE YOU!
TOM CRUISE!
I LOVE YOU BROTHER!
I LOVE YOU MAN!
EVERYBODY.
I LOVE YOU ALL!
CAMERON CROWE!
JAMES L. BROOKS!
JAMES L. BROOKS.
I LOVE YOU!
EVERYBODY WHO'S
INVOLVED WITH THIS.
I LOVE YOU!
I LOVE YOU
EVERYBODY INVOLVED.

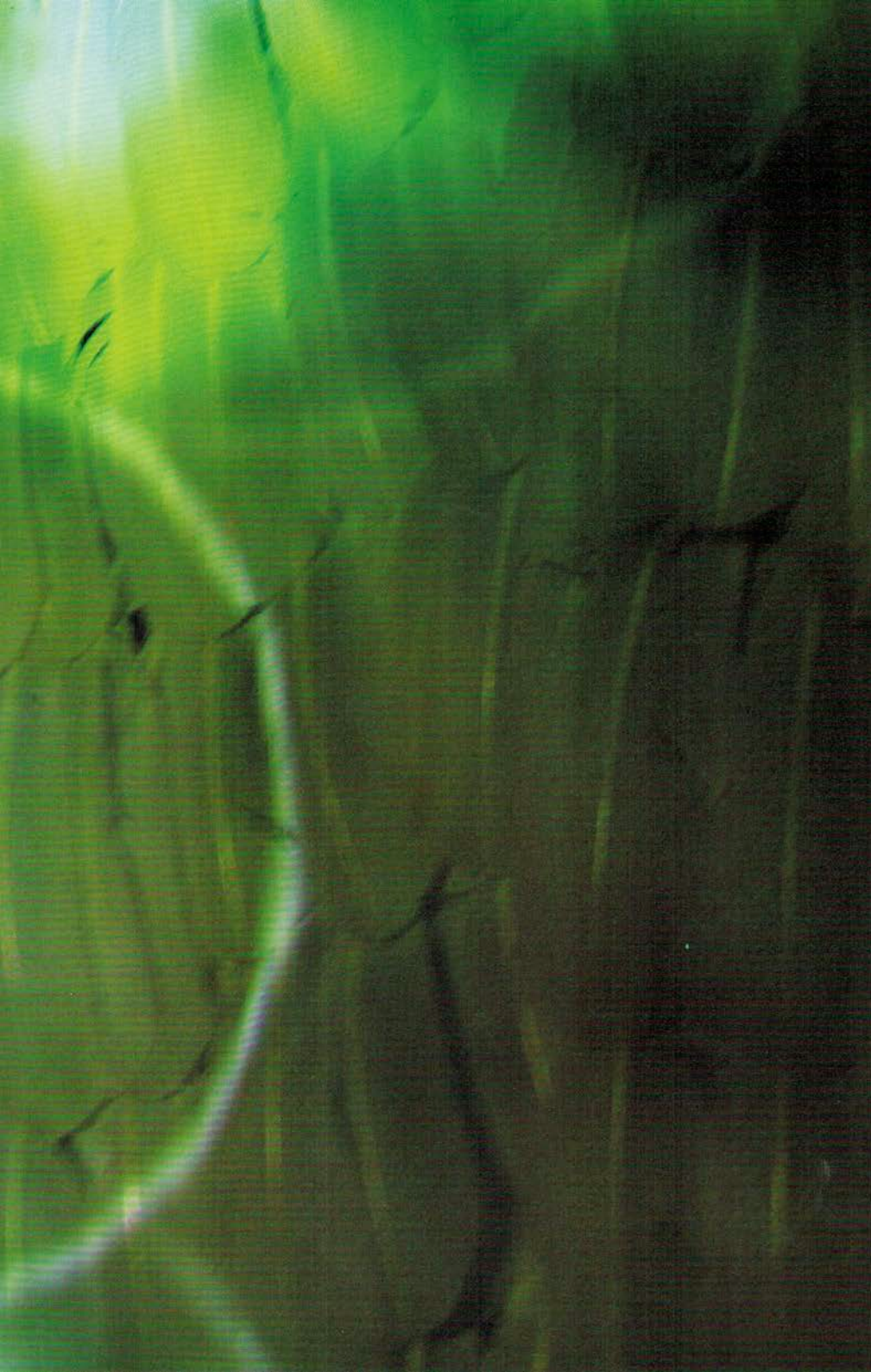
I CAN'T DENY
THE FACT THAT
YOU LIKE ME,
RIGHT NOW.
YOU LIKE ME!

WHAT IS THERE
FOR ME TO SAY?
EVERYTHING WISE
AND WITTY HAS LONG
SINCE BEEN SAID BY
MINDS MORE MATURE
AND TALENTS FAR
GREATER THAN MINE

I CAN'T TELL
YOU HOW
ENCOURAGING
A THING LIKE
THIS IS

Award Samplers, Kathy Slade









The Dreamer Fish, Eleanor Morgan
previous page: *Lucinations*, installation, Doug Smarch Jr.



Interval, video still, Euan Macdonald

2048 km

Melanie O'Brian

2048 km: Robert Arndt, Euan Macdonald, Ed Ruscha, Kathy Slade,
Ron Terada, Mungo Thomson, Kerry Tribe, Anne Walsh.

Curated by Melanie O'Brian

October 16 to November 13, 2004

“2048 km” refers to the driving distance between 8221 Sunset Boulevard in Los Angeles (the Chateau Marmont) and 480 Smithe Street in Vancouver (the Or Gallery). This easy north-south route has been physically and conceptually traveled with frequency and consequence. While Los Angeles and Vancouver are linked through their longitudinal locations, it is shared ideas that bring them together for “2048 km” through present and past histories of art and popular culture. Like the freeways and veins of circulation that define and connect these western sites, the path worn from southern British Columbia to southern California (and vice versa) is one of shared desire.

Desire lines are those worn outside of the given path to create a more direct route to the place desired. Whether it is the diagonal that the postman takes across the lawn instead of using the front walk to deliver the mail, or the route that Vancouver looks south to (rather than east, west, or north), it is the notion of desire and shared concern that draws a line between recent work from these two cities. The highways, flight paths, utopic promises, music, and wryness between these artistic hubs reconfigure the legacy of conceptualism into a new language of visual description.

The exhibition “2048 km” examines recent artistic strategies from Los Angeles and Vancouver that are grounded in art history and critical theory, looking in particular to work from the 1960s by artists such as Ed Ruscha and the later “Vancouver School” of Photoconceptualism. Senior Vancouver artists, such as Stan Douglas and Jeff Wall, have found connection to the work coming out of Los Angeles and continue to do so. For example, Douglas recently reconsidered Ruscha’s *Every Building on the Sunset Strip*, 1966, in his work *Every Building on 100 West Hastings*, 2001. Los Angeles’ conceptual practices from the late 1960s and early 70s had its counterpart in Vancouver with work by the N.E. Thing Co., among others,

and these simultaneous reconsiderations of the art object and an attempted escape from materiality influenced generations of subsequent artists. The effect of this crucial conceptual history can be seen reinterpreted and expanded in current practices by a younger generation of artists in both Los Angeles and Vancouver.

The artists in “2048 km” look to these histories and promises as a way of locating themselves within an artistic lineage while commenting on it and the parameters of its production. In Los Angeles, celebrity and audience reception has long been a defining factor of its cultural milieu. Mungo Thomson’s *The Collected Live Recordings of Bob Dylan 1963-1995*, is a sound track of applause edited from Dylan’s live albums to chronicle audience reception of this musical legend. The work relies on Dylan’s canonical status, his cultural moment, and his mythology. The audio work is both autonomous as well as a soundtrack for the other works in the exhibition. Kathy Slade’s minimal embroidered text pieces, *Award Samplers*, sample lines from Oscar acceptance speeches. From Shirley MacLaine to Halle Berry, the star’s lines speak to reception, celebrity, performance, and applause. Also in reference to Hollywood (and Hollywood North), Anne Walsh’s large text works, such as *Anne Walsh’s Sound FX library*, p. 203: *Human, Hit*, are derived from audio descriptions from movie sound effect catalogues, highlighting the absurdity of the de-contextualized audio, their description, and application.

Euan Macdonald’s work, *Interval*, examines the tropes of southern California as they pertain to both Hollywood and conceptual art. His non-narrative video shows a heavily trafficked road with long shadows of palm trees thrown across its width. This work points to the myths of Los Angeles, its car culture, iconic flora, and historical referents such as Ed Ruscha’s book *Three Palm Trees*. Also referencing Ruscha, Kerry Tribe’s book work, *LAX*, is comprised of drawings that airport travelers were asked to make of their location. The maps are both serial and individual, commenting on a collective authorship that is global rather than local. Here Ruscha’s specificity is replaced with generality, mobility, and shifted landmarks.

Robert Arndt's text work takes the form of statements to the curator, addressing artistic production in an ephemeral manner to highlight the interest in dematerialization that continues to be significant in contemporary art strategies. Ron Terada investigates the other exhibition artists' production and ideas in a gesture of self-referentiality. Terada's project announced the exhibition in the form of an advertising poster (in ten Vancouver bus shelters) and invitation. Finally, a selection of Ed Ruscha's books, including *Every Building on the Sunset Strip*, were shown to direct the viewer back to the mapping seriality of these iconic works. Terada's poster for "2048 km" both looks back and presents the possibility of looking forward. It depicts the artists' names in a stylized setting sun that at once references Ruscha (which Terada excludes from the list of names) as well as Sunset Boulevard, yet also offers the possibility of reversal, that in fact, the sun might be rising.



Lee Ruiter
AlBerta Canada
Aug 27/00

LAX, Kerry Tribe

Somewhere Else

Anne Lesley Selcer

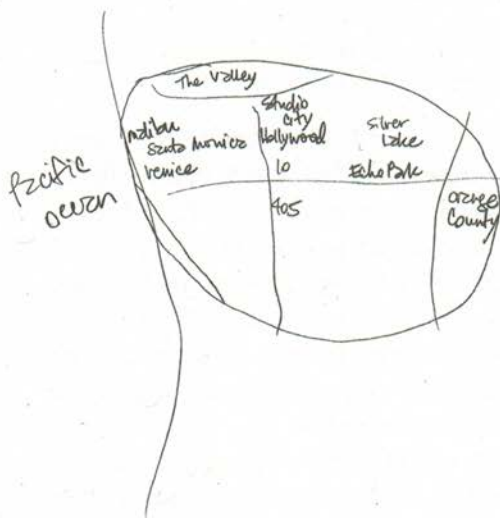
2048 km: Kerry Tribe

October 16 to November 13, 2004

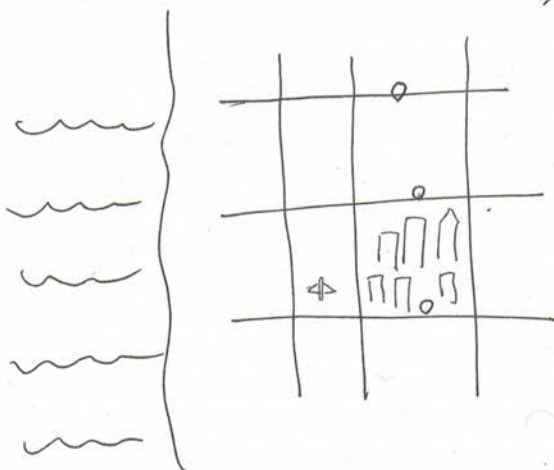
The hidden industrial streets of East Vancouver are a sort of non-place of the city. There, two of the city's shadow industries flourish: sweatshops and low track prostitution. A third industry, Hollywood film, occasionally borrows the dilapidation of this neighbourhood for its backdrop. The Los Angeles crew of the TV show *Dark Angel* has recreated a decrepit city centre just blocks from Vancouver's decrepit Downtown Eastside where actors recreate the sex-for-sale scenes that take place in the neighbourhood in actuality, everyday.

This overlay of reality and simulacra simultaneously imbues and drains the landscape of meaning. It is only one of the features Vancouver has in common with Los Angeles. Both sprawling, newish West Coast cities, they are each the last major point south for their respective country's West Coast. Concepts like "frontier"¹ and "last stop" have suggested utopian possibilities from their settlings. Their identities have always been plural and in flux, created and recreated as waves of immigration, building booms and cinematic representation shift their actual and imagined geographies.

The work of LA's Ed Ruscha has been thought of as the convergence of the terribly real and the totally unreal. The tone of his serial photographs and laconic text works fall dead centre between LA's utopian ether and its pop culture paved streets. In 1966, Ruscha represented his then "back-water"² West Coast city with *Every Building on the Sunset Strip*. In contrast to New York, which could be unified visually from the top of the World Trade Center (Michel de Certeau asserted the view from its heights "makes the complexity of the city readable"),³ LA in the 1960s had no such unifying perspectival point. In Ruscha's street level gaze, the buildings of the Sunset Strip stood in for this sort of unification. They became consequential and monument-like, the Strip taking on cultural gravitas for



Delia ☹️
7.11.00



ohhhhh
2/16/00

the sprawling, ephemeral city. When Stan Douglas offered *Every Building on 100 West Hastings*, 2001 in response, he unified Vancouver similarly around a horizontal, inverse monument.

The palm trees at the intersection of Vancouver's beachfront Davie and Denman intersection embody the relativity of direction.⁴ What could a southernmost West Coast big city look like if not like a sun, spa, and rollerblade resort? Meanwhile, the *northernmost* city of Bellingham, just one hour south, can be characterized by mittens, flannel, hot cocoa, and stands of pine. Dreams and desires can landscape space—LA itself is a recreation, a Mediterranean paradise in the desert with imported palm trees. These shifting psychogeographies inform the work of Kerry Tribe, whose book work *North is West/South is East*, 2002, was the jumping off point for the “2048 km” exhibit. Tribe stopped strangers at LAX and asked them to draw a map of Los Angeles. The results vary from a diagonal line with a dot labeled “airport,” to a graceful sketch abstracting LA's freeway system. The range of representation reflects the plurality of the constructions of perhaps the most frequently costumed city in North America.

The artist stopped one group who she described as “tan and perky girls going to a volleyball tournament”⁵ and asked them for a map. When they wanted to know “where to,” she told them to any place they found interesting. In the margin of the neatly drawn map to their high school, we see the bubble letters of the teenage hand and an earnest, determinedly helpful set of directions. Irreducibly personal markers such as this crop up in much of Tribe's work. In this case, the idiosyncrasy adds charm—but it does more than that, it functions as a fracture that makes the point that the map is always relational, unable to be divorced from who is making it, from who is asking to have it made, nor from the use to which the map will be put. The open model of creation (strangers or friends always participate in her pieces) shifts the emphasis in *North is West/South is East* from a Situationist style subversion of the city grid, which favours individual subjectivity, to the relational. Tribe does not suggest that beyond the grid there is some wondrous “elsewhere,” but only *people*, chains of connection. She writes, “These chance encounters begin to describe a place real and imaginary. The project hopes to disturb the instrumental logic of the airport,

itself a non-place, when the only reason you visit is to get yourself somewhere else.”⁶ In the very space designated for flight, she wants to talk about the city streets; in the place where people give control over to huge, regulated spaces, she wants handmade maps.

This “somewhere else” is also described and renounced in *Double*, 2001, a video which started with a casting call for actors with the artist’s physical characteristics. It depicts a series of young female actors auditioning to play the young, LA artist. As we see the actors struggle to convince and impress, the video begins to be a satire of the seduction, self-promotion, and networking required of young artists. Because it is not an actual audition, it becomes a send up of the starry-eyed LA dream, ironically, on the very flat screen to which this dream aspires. Tribe leaves in several “cuts” during which the actors break character to address her. This is the most simple level of the video’s consecutive and multi-layered interruptions of representation. As we see the artist’s identity acted out by several similar looking women, identity becomes denaturalized or exchangeable. If subjects and objects are bifurcated through visuality, the camera here has filmed both ways. In one instance a buxom, dark haired actress stops in the middle of her screen test to offer a faux self-deprecating on-screen critique, “I’m just too sexual, I have this pouty lip,” and she pushes out her pouty lip and makes big, blank fawn eyes in a filmic kabuki of hyper-sexuality, letting the camera see what she thinks casting directors want to see. This lapse in the acting reveals only more artifice, evoking Marianne Doanne’s notion that the filmed woman is not *really* ever there.⁷ More than the aporia however, what comes across is humour and the tenderness of personal exchange. The woman has revealed what she thinks of herself, what she thinks Tribe thinks of her—in some ways the camera acts as a double mirror reflecting from the front and from the behind. “The tendency of artists to set up the camera and perform in the space before it and to use the monitor as a mirror caused art critic Rosalind Krauss to label video as inherently narcissistic,” says Martha Sturken,⁸ and in fact Eleanor Antin used the camera lens in her 1971 *Representational Painting* as a mirror to apply her makeup. While Antin went

from “natural” to made-up, Tribe starts with high artifice and lets the video camera do the deconstructing. The hot pink background—flattering, false, and dynamic—contributes to this sense that reality is blown up like a shiny Mylar balloon. It makes self-obsession seem self-effacing—neurosis in neon, narcissism in drag. The “confession” and “personal narrative” of the *personal is political* era are re-enacted by aspiring starlets against a hot pink backdrop. But if all of it is satirized, it is also held securely in the sense that the artist and the actors are playing—that they are in the game together. In this way, a content structured by a multi-leveled dissolution of the real manages to reflect the opposite.

In a conversation with Mary Kelly, Leslie Dick, and Sharon Hayes about the place of 70s feminism in contemporary art practice, Tribe says, “sometimes [feminist] articulations come in places that you don’t necessarily look for them.”⁹ She gives Annlee as an example, the Anime character created by Pierre Huyghe and Philippe Parreno and copyrighted in 1999 in the character’s name. Annlee is “open-source” art, a shell that several artists were invited to breath life into. “I do think they’re here as long as we open up the term to include the notion that work can be structurally feminist insofar as it interrogates the systems of identification, power, knowledge, and cultural value,” says Tribe. Conversely, the theorizing of what has come to be known through Nicolas Bourriaud as “relational aesthetics” wholly omits its debt to feminism, though feminism has deeply altered methods and theories across disciplines with its explorations of intersubjectivity.¹⁰ Tribe’s own practice of multiple or absent authorship, which always bears the mark of relationship between the artist and the subject, manifests this politic. *Double* is deadpan and indeterminate like Ruscha’s work, but the flat, ironic affect is filled back out by the social. The real is nowhere, yet everywhere.

1. Neil Smith, *New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City*. London: Routledge, 1996.
2. Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles*. New York: Random House, 1990.
3. Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkley: University of California Press, 1984.
4. For more on this see Sallie Ann Marston, "The Social Construction of Scale," *Progress in Human Geography* 24, June 2000, pp 219-242.
5. Kerry Tribe, Artist's Talk, Or Gallery, October 16, 2004.
6. Kerry Tribe, "North is West, South is East," Kerry Tribe, <http://www.kerrytribe.com/projects.html> (accessed December 13, 2005).
7. Mary Ann Doane, "Film and the Masquerade: Theorizing the Female Spectator," *Screen*, issue 23, 1982, pp 78-87.
8. Marita Sturken, "Paradox in the Evolution of an Art Form: Great Expectations and the Making of a History," *Illuminating Video: An Essential Guide to Video Art*, Ed. Doug Hall and Sally Jo Fifer. New York: Aperture Books, 1991, pp 101-21.
9. Leslie Dick, Sharon Hayes, Mary Kelly, and Kerry Tribe, "Something Like a Bridge," X-Tra, vol 5, issue 3, http://www.x-traonline.org/vol5_3/bridge.html (accessed December 13, 2005).
10. This essay originally discussed the "relational" without use of *Relational Aesthetics*. Since the book is pertinent to Tribe's work, in revisions I chose to address Bourriaud within the terms I had already set forth.

A shorter form of this writing was previously published in October 2004.

Captured by the Spider

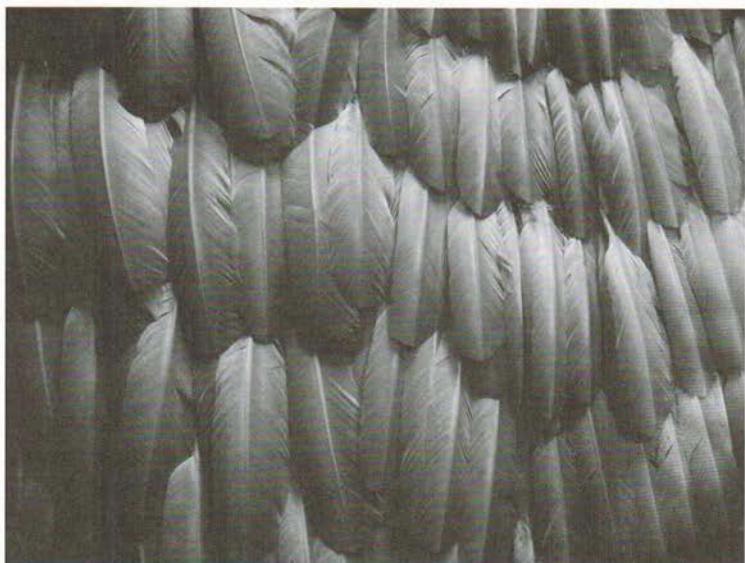
Doug Smarch Jr.

Lucinations: Doug Smarch Jr.
November 27, 2004 to January 15, 2005

One day you're sitting by a river around a campfire, roasting a rack of moose ribs and listening to your grandparents laugh in Tlingit undertones about silly encounters of long ago. Dogs, sniffing the breeze, are tied to trees, preventing an unexpected visit from a wandering bear. Crows sit and watch for a moment and one looks away to steal a piece of food. Then the next day you turn on a television and see a rocket blasting into space with the words, "*The Eagle* has landed on the moon."

It was through times like these that the people of Teslin, Yukon, asked questions about the future of their culture, their people, their language, and their habitat. There was a re-examination of livelihood: the culture was slowly being erased and a more modern lifestyle was taking over. People¹ felt caught between two worlds. The first world was that of a traditional life, the beginnings of the second world came through radio in the early 1920s.² Battery-powered radios were bought on credit at the Taylor & Drury's store in Teslin. People traveled with their radios, including them in their dog-sleds and winter supplies. Radio only worked at night then, and according to the weather.³ If it was a clear, cool night, reception was good;⁴ some people could hear Russia and Japan. Eavesdropping from a still place in the world, the simple radio highlighted nights on trap-lines.⁵ This new way to experience the night, occupied by radio, denied the common practice of listening to nature and each other. The act of sleep was affected, with the radio setting a tradition of staying up late. The chores of the trap-line started before sunrise but the people surfed through the night, for voices, for music.

World War II brought the coming of a highway⁶ on, when the United States feared invasion through Alaska after the invasion of Pearl Harbor. The outer world traveled down this highway and brought advances which grew roots in Teslin. Prior to the forties dog-sled was the means of travel, and without discretion people journeyed hundreds of miles by dog team.



Lucinations, video installation, Doug Smarch Jr.

Transportation was revolutionized and the companionship of a dog-reliant society faded into a novelty saved for competition in winter carnivals.⁷

Teslin lost its isolation; it became a highway town. People were confronted by a race set on defending their country from invasion.⁸ Its residency changed overnight: new people, overworked, tired, dominating, and doing violent acts to a quiet land. Families remember how they had to hide their daughters in the bush so they would be safe from the men working on the highways. Electricity came with the influence of the highway. These people⁹ were used to needs other than flour and salt, a few bullets, and a radio. The strangers needed restaurants, stores, gas stations, bridges,¹⁰ and alcohol, jails, land to inhabit, aircraft, and airports.¹¹

Abolish the circle of chairs

No longer can I give you a handful of berries as a gift,
no longer are the roots I dig used as medicine,
no longer can I sing a song to please the salmon,
no longer does the pipe I smoke make others sit with me in friendship,
no longer does anyone want to walk with me to the blue mountain to pray,
no longer does the deer trust my footsteps

— Chief Dan George

The tonality of the community of Teslin after the forties just flipped. Many people died because of the diseases brought from the highway.¹² People could get jobs; some close to home, others far away.¹³ New jobs allowed people to buy new things, and allowed them to copy the newcomers. Tantalizing was the word for it and people started to want new things.¹⁴

The Alaska Highway eventually attracted tourists—millions each year. There was profit to be made, and not by the locals. Land was taken to set up businesses, and at first the places seemed nice.¹⁵ To work in this world one had to speak English, not the native Tlingit tongue. Locals largely lacked the education to keep up with this world.¹⁶ Although some persevered¹⁷ in their traditional ways, others had to change. Some intermarried with the newcomers.¹⁸ Life after the forties meant shortened travel, new food, new clothing, new language, mission schools, and a monetary system.

The town's name used to be Tes'lahe'en in the local language, meaning "big water," but the US soldiers could not say it properly, and called it "Teslin."

The New Life—minor consumerism, a growing city three hours North (Whitehorse), mission schools, mainstream jobs—relegated the Tlingit tongue to its secondary status. Then the telephone came. First, in restaurants, people could phone to and from the city. Locals used the telephones as contact stations to local towns. Next, telephones entered the private homes of local Tlingit people. The first person to use this phone was a local elder, with the phone put to good use as a distance-minimizer. Immediate presence and person-to-person contact was further replaced by an electric communication device. The social circle expanded, while the local "circle of chairs" was used less than before.

Even with the new phone, however, there remained an older social system of sharing. People borrowed phones: first in restaurants, then in private homes. The ability to use others' property came with a new penalty, however. The device had to operate with money. "Free" was at stake. This was the beginning of the monetary system beginning to infiltrate everyday life. The Teslin Tlingits had been mostly self-sufficient, using their own wood and fuel, getting their own meat, planting their own gardens, recycling clothes, and traveling by dog-team. The telephone created a new type of conflict when an owner lost money due to the high usage of their property. Due to Teslin's isolation, people would make long-distance calls. The major issue was: "What is mine is now not yours." People began to argue and create tension until each person needed a phone of their own. Once established, people concealed their phone numbers from each other because of past rivalries from the borrowing of each other's phones.

In 1969, the author of this thesis was born into this new society. He did not know he was First Nations until he was six years old.¹⁹ The usage of the radio was central to the household. It was turned on in the morning and remained background noise for the entire day; some people used it outside while they polished their cars, and others fixed their cars and played their radios. At nights

there were stories and plays on the radio, but they were not that important, it was just the noise of the radio.

By 1974, the rumour of television had been circulating for about three years. In October, a messenger came to the door and said, "Turn it on."²⁰ So, the television was turned on at nine o'clock that night, October 15, 1974, and a movie was on about space rocks killing people. Of course it was confusing, but watching people without being close to them was intriguing. There was excitement all over town; people had to have a television. The ones who did had a flood of visitors with no room to walk in the houses. The privacy of the quiet nights turned into a glass forest of images, light, and noise. This new instrument exchanged our interests in each other with images from commercials—people singing about food.²¹ Now people could see the news that they heard on the radio, and people largely were shocked at the violence that was happening in the world. Some commented "What is this world coming to?" but never knew the violence had happened long before it was seen.²²

Sadly, the social circle of chairs in a home was abolished. The living rooms in people's homes were interrupted with a television set; the bigger, the better. People's rate of visiting each other dropped rapidly. Television was a good method to copy the mainstream society. There would be moral uprisings when an innovative invention would enchant from the screen, like "The Pocket Fisherman." The people became pre-modern copycats with the television selling a life to a small town. Dad had to have this new chair called the La-Z-Boy chair when the television said so. The living room then grew to include furniture meant for a single person. The social structure of a free home and common social living area gave way to a monitor and Dad's chair. The Tlingit man became the head of a household rather than a man of the forest. The fantastic gadgets peddled on television stunted the time-fashioned cleverness honed by the everyday obstacles of a nature-based community.

The question is: What was given up for media? The veil between the spirit world and the physical? The magic of a natural event that happens on its own accord in the forest becomes thwarted with the magic of media that does not live on its own. It is the direct manipulation of a people who have never directly confronted the Teslin Tlingit.

1. "Living too much like the white man."
2. The first of five technologies to come to Teslin, Yukon; radio, camera, telephone, television, Internet.
3. "You could only hear outside stations then; there was no CBC, I was a little girl then." Jane Smarch, Teslin, 2004, telephone.
4. "Uncle Sandy used to say 'Ahh, gonna be good radio tonight,' when the sky was clear." Jane Smarch, Teslin, 2004, telephone.
5. "I remember people crowding into Uncle Sandy's tent to listen to boxing fights." Jane Smarch, Teslin, 2004, telephone.
6. "The highway came like a flash flood; one day there was silence, another day there was a grader coming over the hill, lights flashing; people thought it was the end of the world." Jane Smarch, telephone, 2004.
7. "We never had cars, we went everywhere with a dog team, sometime days we traveled; we were in good shape, now you can get in a car and go to Whitehorse and be there in the same day; it used to take us a week to walk there." Virginia Smarch, deceased Elder, Teslin, 1980.
8. The quiet First Nations of Teslin never knew patriotism like US soldiers'.
9. The new people were the US army citizens.
10. "The new bridge crossing the river blocked the river, and everyone had to land their boats on the side leading up the river, away from their regular boat landings."
11. Between 1940 and 1943, most of this change happened.
12. Foreign sicknesses, like the cold and influenza, killed many people.
13. Overnight, land-going people became heavy-duty vehicle operators.
14. Already the steam ships visiting Teslin, Yukon from Dawson City carried people from high society in classy dress. This first model of how to dress was from these people, so the first model of Western dress was from the top of the scale.
15. The sideroads stores were on the way to berry-picking grounds and a nice side stop, because packing for camping didn't have to be so complete when we could buy for our needs from the places.
16. The earlier mission schools only went to Grade 8, and only taught men to be gardeners and women to be house-cleaners.
17. The work ethic of Teslin people was deep in honour, so most did well in the beginning.
18. It is rumored that the ability to live a better life is why this move was made; others say this was done because of shame.
19. Then, First Nations were called Indians. The author overheard Mother saying to Father, "They don't like us because we are Indians."
20. The Smarch family had a television. They spent three years waiting for the event.
21. "I remember when I first saw a commercial; it made me laugh when I saw a song made about coffee; we used to sing the song in school, (lyrics) *Hug a hugabug hug a mug of coffee*. It was funny." Youth from Teslin in 1975.
22. It is important for the reader to know that the Teslin Tlingit have a verbal culture, so what they hear, they believe; television had an element of fiction to it. This was damaging to a people that relied on what they heard as it was expected to be true; that is why the Tlingits adapted but were taken down a wrong path, captured in the passiveness that is media.

Eleanor Morgan's Bestiary

J.A. Gaitán

The Dreamer Fish: Eleanor Morgan

March 19 to April 16, 2005

I take this strange affirmation from Baxandall: "We do not explain pictures." Words are generally unimpressed by the artwork, so that the sum of all words will never amount to a single image; but this cannot be attributed to their incapacity to represent the visible world, but to their indifference to the image. And yet they can convey the impression that the artwork has made on the writer, on this writer who, upon visiting the gallery, finds that art viewing has become an extraordinarily self-governing activity, so that I may walk away with any idea whatsoever while I look without pondering, gaze around without examining, glance at what hangs on the walls, what lies on the floor or on a pedestal, treating it all with an indifference that I have perhaps learned from words themselves, or which overtakes me as I realize that I must take it all in only in order to put down in writing what it is that I felt upon encountering the artwork. The first image I remember from Eleanor Morgan's installation is that of the *Dreamer Fish* itself: a black, mucilaginous body, cut open at the abdomen from which unfurled a long strip of yellow tape, arranged on a wooden surface. What a tragic sight!

Unlike the more or less quotidian creatures that appear in her former works, the dreamer fish appears to be an alien being in our world. And this is not only because the dreamer fish inhabits the deep ocean, but also because, as we soon realize, its mating patterns disagree with what we, as humans, believe to be the norm: the female is usually much larger than the male, which undergoes a long and exhausting search, aided only by his sense of smell and the female's bioluminescent antler. Once he has found her, he will bite into the female's body and latch on, like a parasite, *for the rest of their lives*. Sometimes more than one male will find the same female, in which case she will have to deal with more than one parasite.



The Dreamer Fish, Eleanor Morgan

Eventually, they all become a single assemblage, sharing blood vessels, their capacity to produce semen and eggs, and I presume their *joie de vivre*.

And as if this was not enough to make us feel estranged from this species, its physiognomy resembles such familiar representations of extraterrestrial life as Ridley Scott's *Alien*. Indeed, this similarity seems to turn on the commonplace idea that we know as little about the deep ocean as we do about outer space, an idea that threatens to confuse these two very different realms. For example, in the webpage of the Royal BC Museum where the dreamer fish is described we are told: "It is not a far stretch to think of the ocean as [an] 'innerspace' full of alien life forms."¹ It is as if, by way of bringing things close to our hearts, the general idea saves us from our ignorance. With ease we slip from our own world, *this world*, which is the one we "know," towards another space, unfamiliar, that only words can grasp: *alien life forms*, and *inner space*: an infinite identity and an infinite context for the object. How can we make the object descend from this rarefied state if not through naturalistic analogies to human attributes? This, I suspect, is the point that Morgan's work wants to make: that we are unable to relate to "outside" forms other than through *empathy*, and that this empathetic relationship is full of anthropomorphisms.

A wax replica of a dead dreamer fish set on a pedestal welcomed us to Eleanor Morgan's installation. Although it appeared to be an absurd ensemble, it was modeled in the likeness of a specimen held in Victoria at the Royal BC Museum.² Like the latter, Morgan's fish showed an incision at the abdomen from which emerged a ball of wrapping tape... "probably perceived as food and swallowed whole."³ Hence the exchange between organic life and plastic has penetrated even the deep ocean. Yet, unlike the "model" which is set in a laboratory environment, Morgan's copy had been arranged over a square wooden plaque, the lifeless body pushed towards the top right corner, and the wrapping tape stretched across the frame, folding over the lower left border. Laid out in this way, this fish brings up a series of references: its arrangement—as well as the tragic *mise en scène*—reminds us of Piero Manzoni's *Artist's Breath*, 1960; we may then suspect that for a while this fish used to embrace life in much the same way that the red balloon

used to contain air from Manzoni's lungs. And beyond the pop-cultural reference to *Alien* (a reference that is highlighted by the wrapping tape coming out of the stomach), it also has the gruesome, radioactive aspect of a figure from an Enrico Baj "nuclear period" painting.

Upon entering the gallery, I find myself perplexed before an image of a dead dreamer fish. I believe that it is not the animal that finds itself estranged from human beings—although it may find itself estranged upon encountering its representation—but that we, as humans, find ourselves estranged from these creatures and from what they represent. For example, the dreamer fish lives in the deep ocean, and the reason we don't know much about it is that, on one hand, as it emerges into warmer, brighter waters, its heart explodes and it dies, so that any understanding (scientific or otherwise) of this fish is necessarily post-mortem. On the other hand, human beings would also suffer greatly were they to attempt to swim at great depths, and there being little reason for us to travel into this "inner space" that the deep ocean is, it is hardly worth the economic and physical expense. Our worlds are thus separate. But more importantly, the dreamer fish is not as concerned about this fact as humans are.

I must remember, and remind the reader, that Eleanor Morgan's installation has other elements besides the dreamer fish that, as I enter the gallery, lies dead on a wooden plaque. For instance, a series of black-and-white drawings were displayed on a wall, representing the abstract-looking designs of the females' bioluminescent antlers, which are supposed to express their identity. (mostly, it is assumed, so that the male will recognize the female of his own kind). The "didactic" value of these representations (as well as the "functional" role the designs would have in the deep ocean) was highlighted by the fact that these drawings looked like chalk-on-blackboard, although rather than "painting over" Morgan had scratched the black surface to reveal a white layer underneath. At the centre of the space, a hanging helmet with an "antler" and a blue LED light at the tip invited the viewer to "become" a female dreamer fish, bringing up the common science

museum strategy to have the visitor “encounter” the natural habitat. This should have offered the *ultimate* empathetic experience. Perhaps motivated by a desire to participate in the animal’s life, visitors would try on this absurd helmet (which Morgan describes as being at the same time a figuration of the “dickhead”) only to find themselves in a ridiculous (even embarrassing) situation in which it would be impossible to experience the dreamer fish, if not because of the inadequacy of the “technological” gadget, then because of the self-awareness upon finding one’s body attempting to “represent” an alien form. In the end, the didactic function of this gadget is at once its own failure (as a scientific prop) and its success, as it demonstrates that our willingness to empathize is limited by a desire to evaluate other beings *vis-à-vis* our humanness, and that it can be foreclosed in a moment of self-consciousness.

While the work of Eleanor Morgan is not invested in scientific knowledge, nor is it concerned with the anthropomorphic qualities of animals (be these moralistic, or sentimental, or otherwise), it certainly presupposes both. Science cannot understand “alien” forms without resorting to anthropomorphisms (this much can be discerned from the videotaped interview of Dr. Ted Pietsch included in the exhibition), while our relationship to animals appears to remain hopelessly “empathetic.” Such is the genius of animal rights advocacy, where the affective qualities of humans are transferred over to animals, allegedly in the name of the law and in the name of ethics. Nonetheless, the ethical implications of such a travesty are revealed as soon as we are asked to “recognize that animals should be thought of as *persons* under the law.”⁴ Our attitudes towards the “abstract law”—and hence the “abstract” or “universal” laws themselves—must change as soon as we are asked to believe that humans are exchangeable for animals, as if it were the same to say “humans are not animals” or “animals are not humans.” Besides, more than raising questions about the confusion of disguises (animals as humans, or humans as animals), the inability to produce an effective law for the protection of animals *in their own right* seems to confirm that we are incapable of relating to them other than through empathy.

So art is strange to nature. Morgan is right in claiming this, but we are not. It is there, in her playful and ironic (ironic and almost dry, quasi-scientific) display of situations, that we confirm her suspicions, and weave the world of "nature" through references to our own. Already in its name we see that the dreamer fish is asked to carry out functions that do not correspond with its nature. Is this fish more out of place inside a contemporary art gallery than inside a scientific lab? Or, what's worse, a provincial museum dedicated to the presentation of "the natural and human history of British Columbia..."?

1. Kelly Sendall, "Natural History, Dreamer's Family: Oneirodidae," Royal BC Museum, http://www.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/nh_papers/dreamer/dreamer.html (accessed December 8, 2005).
2. Kelly Sendall, Royal BC Museum.
3. Kelly Sendall, Royal BC Museum.
4. Gary L. Francione and Anna E. Charlton, "Animal Rights Law Project," Rutgers University School of Law, <http://www.animal-law.org/center/mission.htm> (accessed December 8, 2005).

We are On You but Cannot See You... We are Running North and South

Ted Hamilton

On my twenty-fifth birthday, I found myself one hundred kilometres east of Nipogan, running north and south in a starless murk through which the headlights revealed nothing but the looming façade of the Canadian Shield bearing down on one side, and the ice-blue expanse of Superior, now smothered in darkness, on the other. The night, teeming like a witch's oils, laid on everything its churchyard mantle, ripped aside only occasionally by the leviathan gnashing of chains and sprays of white light, the Stygian fanfare of horns and crushing wheels as the freight trucks wound deviously and unstoppably past. Balanced between the precipitous climb and the vertiginous fall, the windshield matted in the pulp of the blackflies that had ended life's journey there, I could faintly discern a rose-orange glow: the placental sheath hovering over and protecting the distant town. Occasionally, my eye would be drawn to the brief trail of a descending meteor, flaring out in the upper atmosphere like the remote signal of some unknown and invisible emergency. It was a moment common to the world's desolations—even in their current diminishment—at which the vague marker of my destination, the pulsing orb of public utilities, seemed to recede the further towards it I came, and at which all the usual aids to navigation appeared as material evidence of some cabal whose interest was only in confusion, eliciting in me a strong temptation to turn back into the darkness, looking for some lost sign, some missed direction, some unseen cue.

Increasingly lost in the delirium that normally accompanies voyages whose destinations are always provisional, occasional, or ripe for betrayals, I tuned the radio to a liminal frequency—one occupied primarily by static, but on which, when facing magnetic north, the abstracted tones of human voices would appear. Rounding a wide twist in the highway, the perforated hush of blank waves gave way to a documentary programme on the English Romantic poets, which at that moment had turned to the life and work of Samuel Taylor Coleridge,

author of the *Biographia Literaria*, co-developer of the pastoral elegy, and progenitor of English literary criticism as an endeavour distinct from the belletristic essay or the polemic. During the short span of time that the programme was audible, I was treated to a fragment of a remarkable story concerning the poet, whose career (drowned in laudanum and perennially overshadowed by that of his early partner) had turned, for lack of words, to the staid prose for which he is often remembered. I had known some odd tales told about Coleridge—his participation, with the lesser Romantic Robert Southey, in early consumer experiments with nitrous oxide; his detention on suspicion of Jacobin conspiracy after being caught practicing German in a farmer's field. But the story unfolded on that night was unlike any I had heard before. Nor, incidentally, have I since been able to confirm it, despite Exhaustive Researches.

Apparently, the visionary poet could never be sure when the demiurge would move within him, perverse as such forces tend to be, and discourteous as their actions so frequently are, even in our most private moments, which they respect as the lion respects the lamb. In any case, it struck so seldom for Coleridge after a while that its visitations were almost always met with surprise. And surprise, as is often said amongst the Chomorro people of Saipan, is a vile form of fortune, no less for the saint than for the sniffer of gasses or the taker of tinctures. All this is as prologue to the announcement, made and for a time dwelt upon in the black night of Northern Ontario, that an original and heretofore unknown poem of Coleridge's had been discovered, etched in a tiny script on what was purported to be the poet's own toenail, loosened (so the theory went) in the bath as a result of the degenerative effects of his creeping narcosis.

Through a sophisticated carbon dating process which I cannot pretend to understand, the brief verse, located nowhere else in the poet's *oeuvre*, had been dated to that bleak period in his life when he was preparing, in mounting agitation, the manuscript of the *Sibylline Leaves*. Not surprisingly in an age concerned more with the lesser points of the material world opened by the prying fingers of science than with the lesser points of architectonics and

prosody, the programme focussed exclusively and obsessively on the toenail itself: the miracle of its discovery, the mystery surrounding its transport through the great conflagrations of War and Revolution, the remarkable clarity of the words inscribed upon it, and speculation on the nature of the implement required to effect such a delicate script on so minute a tablet. The relative virtues of the human claw as a surface for writing were briefly touched upon, and then the story of the toenail's finding was offered for contemplation.

Its contemporary origin, as it happened, was a green bottle, clothed in a thick film of dust, on the pantry shelf of a Breton woman, employed in fabricating nets for the fishermen of the obscure town of St. Brieuc, a centre of the scallop industry, which had come into an unfortuitous vogue in the 1970s thanks to a shift in Parisian appetites, particularly around the Yuletide, at which time the cosmopolitan gullet widened despite a seasonal inflation in the price of the shellfish, which had previously been granted the gastronomic value of fresh cut grass. The bottle, corked and sealed with red wax, had washed up on a thin strand of beach along the sea-side trail to Paimpol on the Côte d'Armor, and was spotted by the Breton woman, beyond all probability, while she was taking the mid-morning air in the company of a Scottish terrier named Pastise. It was October of 1938. That the toenail wedged within the bottle had escaped notice for so long was likely due not only to intervening war and ensuing reconstruction. It may have had more to do with the bottle's other contents, namely, a letter, dated September of the previous year, and penned in a hasty French on a peculiar greyish-blue parchment: unmistakably placing its manufacture somewhere in the East Caroline Islands, whose rare and carnivorous Sapphire Sea Snail (*Monoplacophora fulicensis*) is put to use, at some risk, exactly for this purpose.

The missive's author divulged few details about himself, other than that he had been a "guest" of the Japanese Emperor during an unexpectedly long sojourn on the island of Jaluit in Micronesia, which had been mandated to Japan by the League of Nations as part of the German divestiture following the Great War. How he actually came to be there, amidst the teetering ruins of the once-active guano extraction trade, remains murky, but it was clear from the tenor of the letter

that he had fallen under the thrall of that delusional literary beatification peculiar to the Tropical French. The intelligence contained in the letter—that intelligence whose transmission was pressing enough to allow its (albeit frequently careless) commission to the written word, despite the diligence of the Japanese military police and the possible consequences of being discovered in the Act of Authorship—concerned the fortunes of Amelia Earhart and of her colleague Fred Noonan, an expert in celestial navigation, on their ill-fated aerial circumambulation, to which the radio programme appeared now almost inevitably drawn, perhaps in the hopes of finding something there which could pull Coleridge, toenail and all, from the deepening shadows.

In any event, the Frenchman's letter—first cast by its author from the deck of a Vietnamese tramp steamer which had served as his vehicle of escape, then presented with ceremony to the US ambassador, and now held in a glass case at the National Museum—contained some substantiation for the belief that Earhart (at least) had both survived the crash of her Lockheed Elektra and moreover had been in the secret employ of the US Navy, who had used the aviatrix's journey as a screen for achieving their own strategic ends in the days leading up to the Pacific War. The Frenchman's claim to have seen her on Jaluit, clapped in irons and under the constant vigilance of a dour looking escort, lent some credence to a version of the mystery long rejected by cynics and realists, which conjectured that Earhart, who had once taken vehement pleasure in hunting rats with a .22, was in fact captured by the Japanese and forced to make propagandistic radio broadcasts in English throughout the Pacific region under the moniker "Tokyo Rose." But there was more compelling evidence here than support for a theory, for the letter described, with some accuracy, a ring of gold set with a white stone, which its author once saw Earhart regarding with a look he described, in terms typical of those he uses throughout, as a "vexed resignation," while her guard was striking a match off the sole of a spit-polished boot.

There is no time here to rehearse the details of the Earhart mystery in all of its labyrinthine twists and

turns, no need to mention the succession of causes, overlapping and often contradictory, so often trotted out in explanation of the disappearance of the intrepid founder of the 99s—the aviatrix association whose continued existence stands as a comforting alternative to the frustrated search for a *primum movens* that could, like Daedalus’ ant, trace the interior of a mythic structure whose dazzling façade calls forth what is much less than a desire to know or to do: a desire to multiply hypotheses and raise grand syllogistic architectures to follow them. There are, of course, technical explanations for what happened, which divide responsibility, with a greater or lesser degree of even-handedness, between the communications apparatus on the Elektra, and that of the US Coast Guard Cutter Itasca, which had been charged with the role of radio relay station on Earhart’s approach to Howland Island, a tiny islet midway on a direct line between Lae and the islands of Hawaii. There are explanations, highly implausible as they may seem, founded on negative appraisals of the experience and competence of both Earhart and Noonan, these largely propagated by the US military establishment—especially in the Report by the US Navy on the conduct of the search by the Itasca—perhaps to cast a fog over their own lack of both judgement and commitment during the night and day of July 2, 1937 and those immediately following. There are yarns spun, to the shame of US naval prowess, about Commander Warner K. Thompson of the Itasca spending the critical first twelve hours after Earhart’s vanishment chasing meteors that he mistook for signal flares. There are still other explanations that meditate on the perennial deceptiveness of nature: Howland—a sandspit blasted by sun and wind, populated by three US Weather Bureau scientists, one licensed radiotelegraph operator, and a small cohort of feral cats—being easily mistaken for a cloud shadow, or masked by the early morning suncast over the unusually calm waters of the Pacific.

From my vantage point on the brim of the limitless North, I was clearly in no position to shed much valuable light on the din that had accumulated, over decades, around the name Earhart. But the Frenchman’s story had struck too troubling a chord, unlikely as it seemed but for its faithfulness in the matter of the ring, which lent an air of believability to what could otherwise easily be dismissed as the product of a

fanciful imagination, or one hopelessly addled by untold years of imprisonment, loneliness, and despair. The gold band had initially appeared on Earhart's finger as a result of her marriage to the public relations magnate, George Palmer Putnam III, who, in addition to his memorable work in Identity Purveyance, also oversaw the Putnam Publishing Company: the great legacy of his eponymous grandfather, whose edition of the complete works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge (complete but for the verse alluded to above) was safely tucked in a small box in the rear passenger's seat, even as the vague glow of Nipogan pulsed above a distant line of black trees.

With some difficulty, and with the meditative aid provided by a tight grip on the steering wheel, I dimly recalled the existence of a collection of loose sheets forming a small fraction of those of the Earhart Papers which lie under the watchful gaze of uniformed librarians in the US Naval Archive in Washington. These sheets provide documentation of a set of interviews conducted on Saipan by a Jesuit missionary with four Chomorro women in November, 1977—a date which coincides exactly with an ill-fated midnight cast of nets by the scallop fishermen of St. Brieuc, an act which ultimately led to the collapse of their industry, along with their livelihoods. In any case, the interviews trace the fortunes of what one of the women describes as a gold band set with a “white stone,” which had been given to her as a young girl by a white woman with short brown hair (“cut like a man's”) who was staying at a small prison house, enclosed in a fragrant circle of lime trees, referred to locally, and with little affection, as “the Hotel.” She bore signs of “amoeba” (dysentery), to which she would eventually succumb, and had scars from burning on her left side and her left hand, of which she had only partial use. It was rumoured that she had piloted a plane which had been sent by the Americans to spy out the Japanese naval activity in the East Caroline and Marshall Islands. This was clearly the ring given to Earhart by her husband on the occasion of their wedding, and which can be faintly made out by a steady eye in photographs of Earhart lucky enough to capture the long, darting fingers of her left hand, which she usually

positioned, for reasons best known to herself, behind her back or curled on her hip when posing for the photographer's lens, surrounded by dignitaries whose meaty paws were most often clamped moistly in those of her husband, the publisher, Putnam.

Earhart, who drank neither coffee nor tea and stayed awake by the regular use of smelling salts, had written a final letter to her husband on the theme of failure, and posted it from Lae, her last positive terrestrial location, now known widely as a haven for petty thieves, swindlers, mercenaries, and others of darker purpose. In it, she resisted the notion that what she had undertaken could be best understood as "stunt flying"—a notion in no small part promoted by Putnam himself—and reiterated her commitment to a demonstrative social politics, in which failure was understood as a thread available to others similarly willing to risk the ignorant barbs and the stunned gawking of a public too inured to the Dazzling to recognise the necessity of the Mundane, to which even the most dramatic spectacle always alludes. The letter is tinged with a disturbing prescience, most evident through its palpable lack of urgency, its slow and sombre way of communicating details, its seemingly independent will to defer its own conclusion, and its adoption of a melancholic discourse even in the conveyance of cartographic information. Putnam can only have received the letter after Earhart's disappearance, and what he may have experienced in reading it is ill-fitting to attempt to render in words, even if there were any adequate to the task. In such moments, the cold comfort of the mind's eye seems far from the welcome reminiscence that touches the odd memory of the body with a special grace—a faint aroma wafting up from glistening pheromones on an old pillowcase, the reverberation of a familiar and long awaited foot-fall on the stairs behind a wooden door left flirtatiously ajar, the hiccup of a knuckle interrupting the passage of a ring, set with a white stone, down the length of an extended finger.

The Chomorro woman's account of the ring, conforming in all respects with that provided in the St. Brieuc missive, broke down in the end on her inability (or unwillingness) to produce it as evidence, even at the behest of so sublime and terrifying a figure as the Jesuit, whose order's name echoes in the air of all tropical climes as a penultimate knoll of the

End-Days. Unwavering honesty, called forth by a perceived eagerness to listen to all one has to say, is always hostile to empiricism, though not always over so vexing a question as the subsequent fortunes of ring and stone. But that the ring was saved from the crushing darkness of Davy Jones' Locker is almost certain, unless Putnam was far less concerned than his own memoirs suggest with the singularity of a token for affections as singular as his own for one whom others, with scarce investment and meagre understanding, referred to as "Lady Lindy." For if the unapologetic frankness of the Chomorro woman is to be taken as characteristic rather than exceptional, then we must at least entertain the notion that the ring passed hands once again before foundering on the jagged shoals of that special brand of human forgetfulness reserved for little artifacts that, once they have left the orbit of the great and powerful, retreat into an ordinariness as low as are the very Fiends.

Here again we must follow the presumably faithful accounts of the Saipan indigenes, who, in the months leading up to the devastation of the Japanese empire, were seconded by the US Navy to recover what they could of the wreckage of a bomber downed on its return from unleashing its fiery excrescence on the city of Nagoya. The flying fortress had found its unexpected final destination, though sadly without its crew, on a grassy plain perched between twin horns of rock on the tiny volcanic island of Anatahan, in the Northern Marianas chain, about seventy-five nautical miles north of Saipan. The island rises sheer out of slate waters, a blackened bicuspid, and affords only narrow stretches of beach for landing. The grasses saddled in the brooding cone, hospitable as they might seem, are in the end only confirmation of the impossibility of escape for those unfortunate enough to find themselves tumbled upon them. And indeed, when the Chomorro emissaries scrambled up the rocky cliffs, driven by a skill or confidence which it is difficult to conceive, they came upon a group of exactly this type of unfortunate in the form of thirty Japanese seamen and Ms. Kazuko Higa of Okinawa: castaways from vessels downed in June 1944 in the heat of the hostilities that had set a vicious light to the night skies above the Marianas Trench. Haunted by visions

of the dead eyes of their fellows, slimy things moving upon a slimy sea, they began a new life upon this rocky antipode, drowning their memories in an intoxicating beverage they made out of coconut rinds, and which they called "Tuba," a not always welcome addition to an existence already fringed with barely concealed tensions.

It is not clear whether the Chomorro ever fulfilled their mission, since most of the salvageable material from the wreckage had been appropriated by the castaways to fabricate basic necessities: oxygen tanks had become water containers; scrap metal had been transformed into cutlery, cooking implements, and roofing; clothing was fabricated out of parachutes, while the parachute chords served as fishing line; fish hooks and elaborate flies were crafted from the springs of machine guns, an ambivalent pacification of the death-dealing apparatus—or at least a displacement of its ultimate object. What is clear, however, was the intransigence of the marooned cohort when posed the question of their eviction from the island. At this early date, a mere eight months into their stay, they were unconvinced that their fortunes would improve if they took the outstretched hands of the US military, even in the welcoming form of the Micronesian ambassadors. Indeed, they maintained this position for over seven years until they received a letter, deposited on their heads from a low-flying plane, whose author was no less than the Emperor Hirohito himself, magnanimous even in defeat, whose words were confirmed as his by a wax stamp bearing the ornate and impenetrable impress of the Imperial Seal.

It will come as little surprise that this obstinate attitude was not shared by Ms. Kazuko Higa, the sole woman amongst the island's tiny settlement, known amongst the men, in one of those chimerical parallelisms which it is best only to note in passing, as "Tokyo Rose." She partook at first in much of the life of the community, contributing to ensuring their survival amidst seemingly insurmountable adversity. But soon the signs of trouble began and she increasingly removed herself from the company of the men, preferring to brave the island's peripheral walls and descend to its near inaccessible beaches to light signal fires. These she would tend unflaggingly and on a regular rotation which perhaps she hoped would ease the

pain caused by the disappearance, in succession, of the men to whom she was thought to pay an undue degree of attention, of whom it was said that they were swallowed by the waves while fishing. The great maw of Ocean can never be slackened, so it is said, and its thirst for those who balance, however carefully, on its very lips is as limitless as the stars, and as remote to our understanding. But nevertheless, Ms. Kazuko Higa refused, unlike Coleridge's Mariner, to clothe it in the regalia of the Reaper, knowing all too intimately that the act of anthropomorphism is frequently a mere reassignment of responsibility for the confusions stirred in soul and mind by the cruel fortunes that inevitably follow when humans keep company with one another. One can imagine her mood: confronting the midnight sea just as some primordial creature must have done in the long ago ages of the earth's childhood, wailing to the thin distant strand of the horizon on a barren shore, the hot energy of the young stars collapsing on the endless waves, no sound but the hush of the world's guts beating on the rock-strewn land, a beckoning echo in the soundless deep....

It was not until July of 1950, the very year in which George Palmer Putnam joined his wife in Elysium, that the signal fires were definitively identified by a passing frigate, and that Ms. Kazuko Higa was finally granted her wish to depart Anatahan forever. She was immediately bestowed to Saipan, in a state of near catatonia broken only when they landed and when she was placed in the company of a Chomorro interpreter—the very woman who, twenty-seven years later would lay bare the story of the golden band at the hem of the Jesuit Missionary. Even then, comforted by the presence of the interpreter, she would say little about her time on the volcano, and preferred to forget whatever it is that people usually wish to forget with the heartiest prayers, but that usually endures in the very form of the prayers themselves. She asked to be returned to her home on Okinawa, where, as yet unbeknownst to her, the Americans were just settling in, and where she could aid her family in the fabrication of nets for the scallop fishing trade she had left so many years previously to be closer to a sea that she now regarded only as the object of her slow, serious, but hopeless

revenge. It was indeed here in the Summer of 1977 that she was approached, even as she was inching inexorably towards the grave, by three scientists from the vicinity of Brest who had expressed a curiosity about the materials she used to manufacture the collectors employed by the Okinawan scallop fishermen to capture scallop larvae, thus allowing the latter to develop to adulthood protected from wayward ocean currents, gluttonous starfish, and the undifferentiating nets of the fishermen themselves. The scientists hoped to introduce a similar strategy in communities along the Côte d'Armor, and so to rejuvenate the rapidly depleting scallop population. But the woman, perhaps in the absence of the Chomorro interpreter who had shown such patience and caring, said little, preferring to twist a gold band around her finger: a gold band set with a white stone that had been the gift of George Palmer Putnam to Amelia Earhart, whose bones now lay scattered under earth and sea, the circumstances of their love relegated to pointless words, idle fantasy, and a consuming lust for definitive endings.

At this point the frequency, to which I had admittedly ceased to attend not long after it had abandoned the trail of the mysterious toenail, shifted with my trajectory along the cliffside, returning to the quiet whirr of static, and leaving me to ruminate on the dull, repetitious grey of the asphalt, punctuated with yellow lines like an endlessly repeated "O" spun out in Morse code along all the vehicular passages of the world. I was becoming fatigued with endless manoeuvring through the moonless night and with the racket caused by the over-complication of a simple story about a toenail. The lights of Nipogan appeared no nearer, and the meteors continued to fall, just like they had in the faraway skies above windswept Howland Island for the lazy eyes of Commander Warner K. Thompson of the Coast Guard Cutter *Itasca*, bobbing at its leisure on the rolling black swell, its darkened hull reverberant with Earhart's haunting last words: "We must be on you, but cannot see you...we are running north and south."

At the end of my already meagre energies, I pulled over to the side of the road, and switched on the overhead lamp to ease the process of rummaging through my small box of books, thinking perhaps to find some clue to the strange story amongst the footnotes and annotations in the

Putnam edition of Coleridge's complete works. Producing the volume, however, I revealed something quite different. Pressed between two pages, one concluding Book XXVIII of the *Biographia* and the other beginning the famous essay *On Art or Poesy*, I discovered a pearlescent white sheet, folded into a quarto, upon which was inscribed: "define pastoral elegy"—a task I find myself as incapable of performing now as I did then.

HISTORY AND MANDATE

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The mandate of the Or Gallery is to provide a non-profit gallery that benefits the community as a whole, providing exhibition space to local and out-of-region contemporary artists, particularly those who make experimental art their practice. The Gallery seeks to make contemporary art accessible to a wide and varied audience through the organization of artistic projects at the Or, at sites other than the Gallery proper, through publications, and through the touring of exhibits to national and international venues.

The Or Gallery is unique in that its Director/Curator, a practicing artist, is hired on a limited basis and is solely responsible for the programming. This lends a dynamic, ever changing character to the Gallery while providing the Artist/Curator with an invaluable opportunity to organize and promote the work of their contemporaries. The Or Gallery is a member of the Pacific Association of Artist Run Centres.

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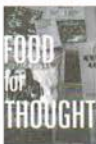
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