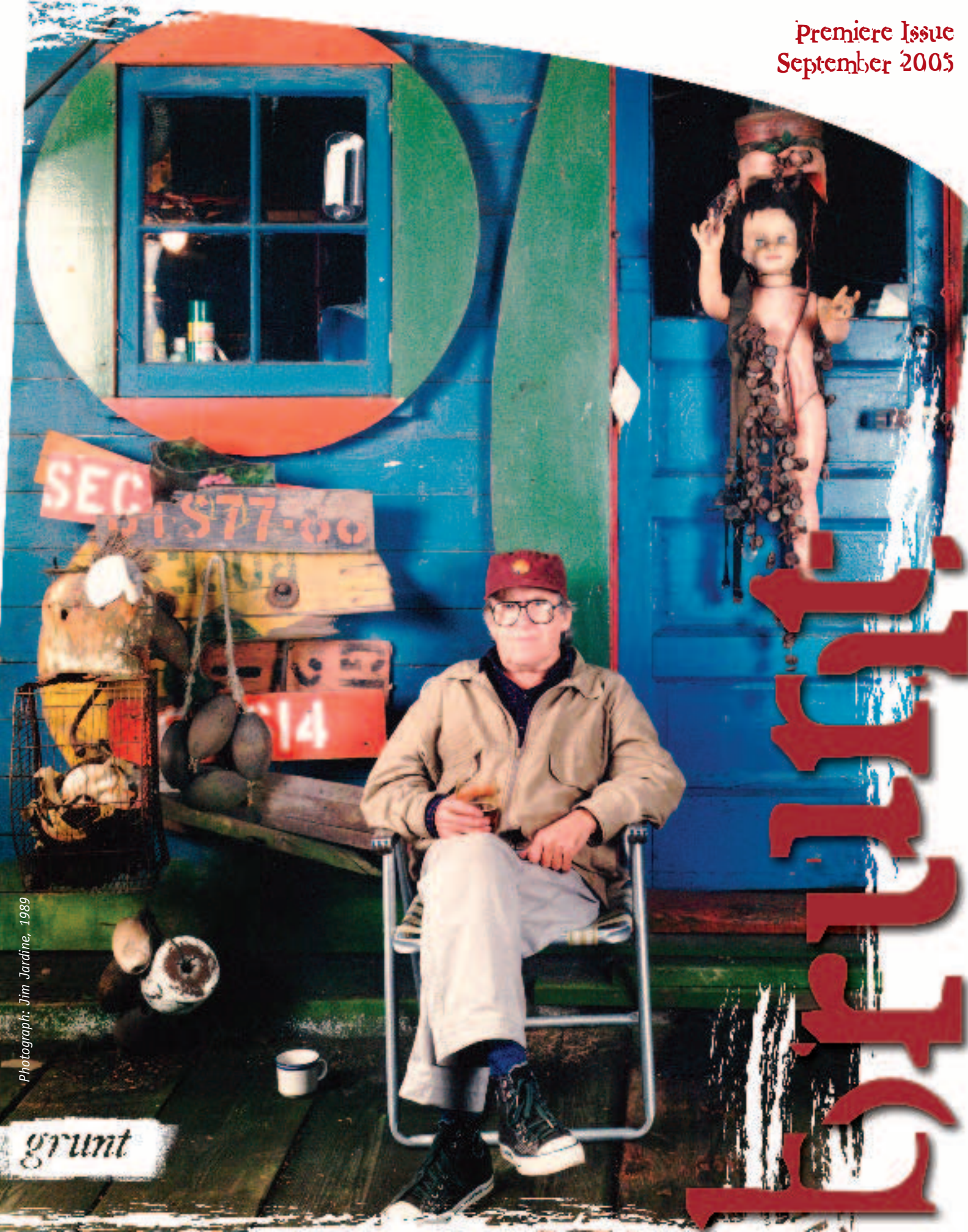


Premiere Issue
September 2005



Photograph: Jim Jardine, 1989

grunt

grunt

grunt

welcome

Welcome to the premiere issue of **grunt**. This is the beginning of what will be an exciting new chapter in **grunt**'s publishing history.

grunt has been publishing our seasonal brochure for nineteen years and the brochure has served as our main marketing tool over this period of time. It was distributed widely and many people have told us stories of seeing it on a wall in a far-off artist-run centre and how that was the first time they had heard of **grunt** gallery. In addition to the brochure, we have published twenty art monographs over the last four years by Vancouver artists, featuring a range of writers and styles.

grunt's mandate is to take the marketing reach of our brochures and marry it to the developed content of the monographs. It will provide artists with a wider distribution for their work and ideas. It will co-ordinate our web site, gallery and publishing activities with a new inter-connectivity, thus enhancing the experience for people who don't live in Vancouver, and those whose access to our programming has always been difficult. It will provide Vancouver gallery goers with printed and web material adding value to their experience with **grunt** exhibitions and performances and it will act as a resource guide for students and educators.

It's a tall order and we will have our hands full developing this over the next few years. Our vision is to include online events and increase inter-activity enabling our accessibility to a wider audience, and further promoting Vancouver and Canadian artists.

We, at **grunt**, are very excited about these new initiatives. I'd like to thank Peter Morin, our editor, and Auni Milne, our designer, for all their hard work. I'd also like to thank Susi Milne and Daryl Akin for their logistical input, Technical Director Jay Thompson, Gallery Administrator Daina Warren for their support, as well as the writers and artists whose work are featured in these pages.

— Glenn Alteen, 2005

Managing Director: Glenn Alteen
Editor: Peter Morin
Design: Auni Milne
Copy Edit: Ga Ching Kong, Peter Morin

Hillary Wood has been active in the Vancouver arts community as an artist and writer since her arrival in 1979.

Merle Addison is an honours graduate of the experimental department of OCAD. His images have been published in a number of arts magazines, including MIX, C Magazine, and BlackFlash.

Michael Turner is a writer of fiction, criticism and screenplays.

Ga Ching Kong is a writer and educator whose work explores decolonizing through practices of mind and body.

Camille Baker is a media curator/artist/instructor living in Vancouver.

velveeta krisp. a chip off the old block. of a culture that stocks. aisle after aisle. of bleach, mr.clean, lady speedstick and glade rose-scented air freshener. befriend dirt, smelliness. said she.

Yani Kong is a writer and student living in Vancouver.

Michelle Irving (AKA granny's ark) is a writer and electronic music composer. Currently she is studying for a MSC degree at the school for Computing Arts and Design Sciences at Simon Fraser University.

Daina Warren is of the Montana Slavey Cree Nation. Since completing her degree from ECIAD, she has curated many projects and exhibitions with the **grunt** gallery and with the Vancouver arts community.

Peter Morin is of the Tahltan Nation of Telegraph Creek, BC. Peter's work looks into issues of First Nation's identity, family and healing.

Glenn Alteen is a Vancouver-based curator, writer, and director of **grunt**.



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CITY OF VANCOUVER

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by Hillary Wood


Keith Larner & Albert



The trials of Wong Foon Sing

In 1924 Scottish nursemaid Janet Smith is killed in the basement of Hycroft House, the Shaughnessy Heights' home of prominent and privileged pharmaceutical exporter, F.L. Baker. Chinese houseboy, Wong Foon Sing, discovers the body and reports it to police. Soon after, he is forcibly taken to the Canadian Detective Agency in the Empire Building on Hastings Street where he is beaten and interrogated. He is let go the next day. Months later he is abducted by Klan-hooded men and shackled to the floor of an attic

in Point Grey. He is beaten, threatened with death, and interrogated for six weeks. Again he is let go. That same night he is taken into police custody and this time charged with murder. Brought to inquest, he is finally released for lack of evidence. The investigations and exposés conducted at the time led down murky alleyways of police interference, bribery, drug smuggling, and corruption in the political and social fabric of the city. The murder of Janet Smith has never been solved.



We walk into Keith Langergraber's sculptural installation as if onto a film set. Pages of dialogue, storyboard, spliced film, the walls of the set, the various tools and remnants of the film trade all make this clear. The stage set consists of a detective's office. The desk is strewn with the gathered evidence in the murder case — photographs, case files — a typewriter, and a phone. In front of the desk sits a chair draped with rope. The focus of the camera, and hence of our attention, is not on the murder, but on the events arising from it —

The Trials of Wong Foon Sing.

Langergraber has adopted elements of film noir as the style with which to express the dark and nebulous aspects of the story. The themes and style of film noir are defined by a sinister melancholy permeating the plot and despair or menace emanating from the characters. The evocative quality of darkness — the way in which not light but its absence is used — defines the mood and develops the bleak narrative. Brief recognitions loom into the muted light, shrink back again into the dark recesses, soon to be replaced by yet another corrupt intrigue, or by sorrow. There are no heroes on which to pin our hopes for solution or innocence; there are only villains or victims or anti-heroes enveloped in their own intrigues; and we, who watch.

We are called as witnesses to a plot and characters held captive by the props of the stage set — the case files, the detective's desk, the eloquent empty chair. Those props, even in their resolute muteness, relay the story, but the chair, the lighting, the fragments of clues do not, in the end, solve the mystery. They only serve to deepen it.

The filmmakers' equipment — the cameras, the notes, the empty coffee cups — combined with the sculptural quality of the set make it clear that this is not a simple reconstruction, but an installation of an imagined documentation of events arising from an historical mystery. The removals from the core are dizzying. The vortex of meaning, implication, and allusion has no bottom, no resting place, in which there is resolution or victory.

Overlapping narratives are whispered from the shadows of this history — the forensics and the forgetting and the intent that shape its interpretation. Whatever ominous fragment is clear in one moment is, in the next, obscured by the image of what has come before, or given an entirely new meaning by what comes after. Time becomes circular; consequences rippling out from events like the waves from a pebble thrown in the water. Each event — the murder, the torturous interrogations, the scandal, and the installation itself — refers to the other and is changed by it. We step back and the film set once again highlights the artifice, the facade. This is not real, nor is it pure fiction. The story seems to have no beginning or end, and yet is able to contain shifting layers of symbol, meaning, and implication without becoming lost in its own complexities. Langergraber lets the plot, the understanding, unfold in us.

We grasp the multi-layered narrative and its implications more by intuitive leap than by any linear construction, or transparent solution, contained within the elements of the installation. There is no single answer in the turgid explanations and evasions of history, or the unavoidable exclusions of documentation, or the fragmented exposures of event and character. There are only suggestive hints of retelling — the footprint of a truth not yet in sight, and perhaps nonexistent.

Langergraber is unafraid to push aside the cobwebs of a hidden history, or the fretful memory of betrayal. His fascination with abandoned places and histories carries his work forward from one project to the next. He follows the clues of his environment like footprints in a landscape of visual metaphor. He is somehow able to recognize the ghosts that reside in objects, places, or events, and he brings them to us by an art devoted to the evocation of things past, or passed by.

In this retelling, Janet Smith never really emerges from the shadows. Although she is at the heart of the mystery, at its beginning, her murder becomes obscured by the darkness of crimes which go far beyond the individual: racism; corruption of those in power; deceit and betrayal; disillusionment and hopeless alienation; hatreds and injustices, and our distance in the recording of them; our colonization of site and story; the lurching shadows of human nature.

Keith tells this story: After the conception and planning of ***The Trials of Wong Foon Sing***, he came in his explorations upon an abandoned building, and discovered a way in. Along a darkened hall he came upon a room, its windows boarded up, lightless but for the wan shafts that struggled through the cracks between the boards. Pushing the door wider he saw that on one side of the room was a table with a section of garden hose lying on it. In the middle of the room sat a chair, draped with rope.

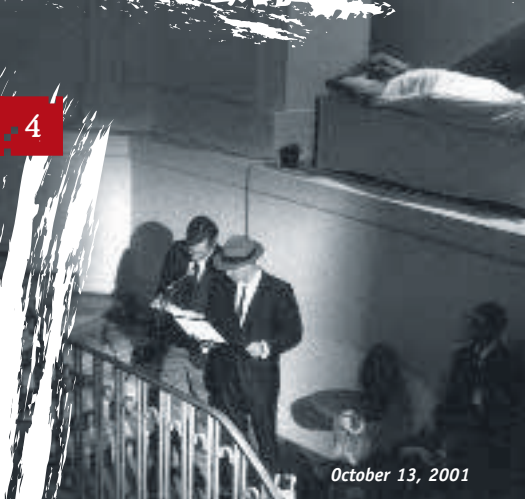
Kokoro Dance – October 1, 1999



The History of LIVE.

a photoessay by Merle Addison
text by Glenn Alteen





October 13, 2001



October 13, 2001



October 14, 2001



October 19, 2001



October 19, 2001

Welcome to LIVE 2005.

The first **LIVE** Biennial grew out of a one-time initiative by Brice Canyon and myself, to create a festival and publication around performance art on the 20th year anniversary of the Living Art Festival produced in 1979 by Glenn Lewis, Kim Tomczak and Paul Wong. In the 20 years after that festival, painfully little had been written about Vancouver Performance. Both **LIVE** and **LIVE at the End of the Century** — which is available on our web site — were an attempt to bring some attention, critically and publicly, to Vancouver performance art.



October 20, 2001



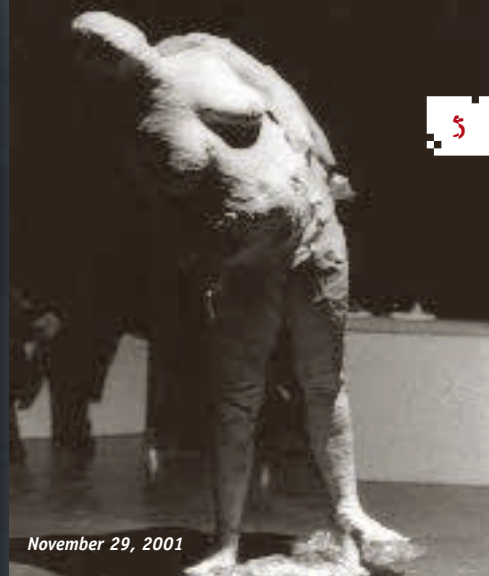
October 21, 2001

Clockwise from top left: Monde Arte – Glenn Lewis, *The Dragging Angels*, Erin Stanley and Corin Sworn, Naufus Ramirez Figueroa, Irene Loughlin, Rebecca Belmore, Lisa Deanne Smith.

November 2, 2001



November 10, 2001



November 29, 2001

LIVE is a new model for presenting performance. Working with a host of visual arts institutions and curators to produce the biennial brings a wide range of ideas around performance to the table. Its six-week format highlights solo performances and gives each artist the ability to develop their work without restrictions of venue and format, with the support of a curator and institution. For audiences, it shows a wide range of emerging and established artists with local, national and international reputations. **LIVE** enriches Vancouver's art history; it is the first festival of a new century. So far, the range of work has been spectacular and, I believe that the **LIVE** Biennial has only just begun to amaze us.

Merle Addison's photographs of the performances are performances in themselves. He moves stealthily around the space to get the best shots on black and white film, with no flash. The audiences mostly don't even notice him and it's later, when you see the results, that you realize how much he has nailed it, capturing the one shot or moment that defines an artist and this particular work.



October 25, 2003



November 10, 2003



November 24, 2003



November 5, 2003



November 29, 2003

Clockwise from top left: David Yonge, Lorena Wolffer, Josée Tremblay, Devon Gifford, Rodney Graham Band, Naufus Ramirez Figueroa, Aiyana Maracle, Jamie McMurry.

by Michael Turner

Al Neil



On Al

Al Neil is dead. According to his press kit, his last show was in 1992, and he has not had a review since 1994¹. By today's standards, if an artist goes that long without a show or a review, he is dead.

Al Neil is dead and living in Dollarton. But where is Dollarton? Scrolling down a list of Canadian towns, there is no Dollarton. Though I know where Dollarton is, and what it might mean to the Burrard First Nations, Modern Literature, and a Vancouver avant garde², I can no longer find it. But that's where Neil lives. In Dollarton.

A dead man living in a place that no longer exists; seems appropriate that an artist whose practice has for almost sixty years been at odds with public institutions, the market, and

the market's tendency to promote and profit from distinctions made between mediums should end up in a place that no longer exists. The only thing called Dollarton now is the highway that takes you there — wherever 'there' is.

I have known of Al Neil for almost twenty-five years, yet my introduction to his work came later, in 1993, while programming readings at the Railway Club. The series was called Reading Railroad, and the idea was to present literary writers, followed by a songwriter whose work had some ...'literariness'. It was while assembling a list of 'literary' musicians that I ran into Jamie Reid, who urged me to 'look into' Neil. It took some looking but eventually I was able to hear a copy of *Kenneth Patchen Reads Poetry In Canada with the Al Neil Quartet*

(Folkways, 1959), after which I was impressed enough to ask Neil if he would participate in Reading Railroad.

But getting in touch with Neil proved difficult. Not because I didn't know where Dollarton was, but because the people I called for his number — the people I was told would know him — scoffed. They said Neil no longer 'had it', that booze and pills had melted his fingers; that inviting him to perform would be disrespectful, exploitive, because "the man's off his rocker, you know" — "whacko" — "in name only," etc. So I dropped it. A few years later, while at Scott Watson's house, I saw a collage Neil had made from a letter found in his medical records — one doctor telling another how astounded he was that a man who had devoted so much of his life to drugs and alcohol (Neil) was not only alive, but in full possession of his faculties.³

I tell this story not to mythologize Neil but to rescue him from those who know him — who choose to remember him — as one thing: jazz pianist. Not that one has to work very hard; as some Vancouverites will tell you, Neil (like the late Roy Kiyooka) is one of our city's great artists at large, someone who, like Duchamp, arrived in one medium, only to impress in another — and what that looks like, to do both, to be post-medium.⁴

As I said, Neil's career spans almost sixty years, from his return to Vancouver after the Second World War, to today, where he has for the past few months been contributing to meetings in advance of the Fourth Vancouver Performance Biennial, a festival that hopes to present him as the kind of artist performance attracts. It is during the biennial that we will get an overview of the artist's life and work: a conservatory-trained musician who, in 1952, opened a jazz club because there was nowhere else to play⁵; his travels in 'hardbop', jamming with the likes of Carl Fontana, Art Pepper, and Sonny Red; his collaboration and recording with poet Kenneth Patchen (before Ginsberg and Kerouac attempted similar projects); and then, in the early-1960s, his reckoning, his dissatisfaction with modal music and the road jazz was taking, his decision to quit playing changes and...

In a 1970 Coda interview, Neil talks about this reckoning, figuratively exploding at the beginning of the sixth paragraph.

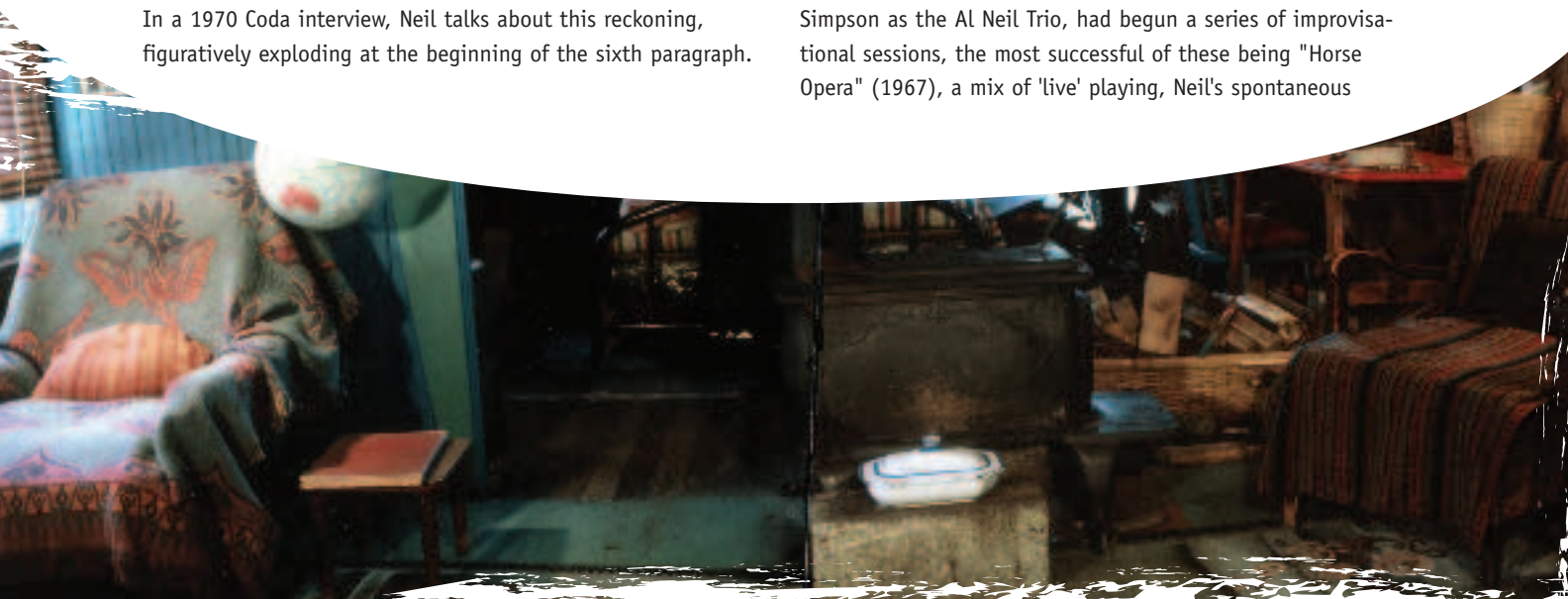
Suddenly he's running down the Halls of History, shouting names — *Charles Ives and Henry Cowell; Duchamp and Stravinsky; Satie, Virgil Thompson, John Cage; Wagner and Webern*. He is seeing parallels between writing and painting; decrying technology and the erasure of the fingerprint; lamenting stasis in the avant garde. Yet these are not the ravings of a mad man but someone who has been thinking, reading, researching, questioning the things jazz music could only tap a cane at, like a blind man searching for a park bench.

But what strikes me, what resonates, is not the proper names or the broad reference range — Artaud, the Dadaists, Beckett; nor an artist exploring convergence where others seek fences. Nor his quitting music to re-educate himself (as Sonny Rollins did, when he stopped recording and touring to wander Brooklyn Bridge at night, blowing his horn until he'd re-learned it) — none of that. What strikes me — what resonates! — is the sentence from the sixth paragraph of the Coda interview. You can almost see the veins in it.

*But if you could conceive of a music that could not be written down (that may seem like a truism of a cliché) it seems to be a gigantic mental leap to think of the fact you could play configurations and patterns, let alone get into anything else in any kind of state of being where you might be able to express beyond that.*⁶

I have read this sentence twenty times now, and each time I read it something new happens. Although the subject is music, it carries no notes (a tune, yes, but no notes or sound to speak of). Because it was transcribed it is closer to thought — awkward, overlapping — than writing. But as writing it is visual, and there are things to look at. Like I said, veins — but veins feeding driftwood, scrapmetal, rags. There are corners, but as I have yet to see their ends, I cannot say if they are part of a frame. If I were to recreate it, without words or sound, it would look like assemblage, collage.

In the three years prior to the Coda interview, Neil, performing with bassist/producer Richard Anstey and drummer Gregg Simpson as the Al Neil Trio, had begun a series of improvisational sessions, the most successful of these being "Horse Opera" (1967), a mix of 'live' playing, Neil's spontaneous



narration, with samplings from a turntable, operated by Simpson.

Here is the text from the opening minute of "Horse Opera":

Okay it's Saturday night and this is Big Sam Finestein the Third and we're down there on President Johnson's ranch and we're gonna get together the greatest epic western that's ever been done before and President Johnson has allowed us the run of the Pedernales River that runs alongside the ranch there. Right now Bela Legosi 's having a swim and Rin Tin Tin is flicking his tail at Roy Roger's great horse Pegasus. What we gotta do is think up some new scenes and we gotta get them looser and we gotta arrest everybody that doesn't get the possible sequence together before it starts.⁷

"Horse Opera" is an important and prescient work, not only for its use of turntables as source instrument, its Pee-Wee's Playhouse-style environment, or its pursuit of the contextual riff-scape (later popularized by such proto post-rock bands as The Mothers of Invention), but as a sonic cousin to the visual collages, assemblages, slide and video works Neil exhibited as part of his first solo show, *West Coast Lokas*, at the Vancouver Art Gallery, in 1972.

Although he had been working with visual artists leading up to Lokas⁸, the show marked the arrival of Neil as an artist at large. Indeed, while jazz music was importing new cultures and fusing with rock, Neil was speaking visually, performing not as a buttoned-down sophisticate or an image-indifferent jazz snoot, but as a football-helmeted shaman, a bushman living in the footprint of Dollarton's other Mod-squatter, Malcolm Lowry.

Neil's production continued through the Seventies and Eighties, but the world was quickly changing. 'Free market' economies were expanding, and with the expansion came the decline of political borders. However, the decline of these borders brought new borders — and this was certainly the case in the arts, where lines that had once kept media distinct — lines dispensed with during the Sixties — were being redrawn. Nowhere was this more apparent than at the Vancouver Art Gallery, where, in the mid-Seventies, incoming director Luke Rombout announced that the gallery would no longer be a site of experimentation — be-ins, happenings, performance — but a place for visual art.

By the end of the Seventies, galleries and collectors had grown tired of the cool, deadpan strategies of minimal and conceptual art. In its place, neo-expressionism and figurative painting rose. Looking at Neil's collage work from the mid-1980s we see the market's effect. Suddenly the artist is using higher quality paper, and the collages that once intrigued critics were beginning to look less like "pages of a biography" and more like the artists his work had been compared to — Motherwell and Rauschenberg⁹. This, I think, had less to do with Neil than the times.

In the early Eighties, Vancouver was remaking itself for Expo '86, a world's fair conjured up by our provincial government to facilitate the shift from a resource-based economy to one built on service. Like Trudeau's 1970s invocation of the War Measures Act, Expo '86 provided a rationale for all sorts of social engineering (kicking pensioners out of their homes, massive cuts to health and education, increased spending of federal transfer payments on infrastructure). Expo was an ideological smoke screen — just as the upcoming 2010 Olympics will provide a similar rationale.

Last week I saw a picture in the newspaper of one of Neil's contemporaries, the architect Arthur Erickson. Erickson — who, like Neil, was born in Vancouver in 1924 — was standing beside a maquette of a building he and his partners had recently presented to City Hall. The building, a magnificent twisting tower, had just been approved, and Erickson seemed pleased that it would be ready for the new Olympic-era Vancouver. This was a very different Arthur Erickson than the one who spoke so bitterly at the memorial for former Vancouver Art Gallery curator Doris Shadbolt the year before. Bitter not because he despised Doris Shadbolt, but because the institution that once employed her had postponed his retrospective two years, on account of a designer whose show required more resources than thought necessary.

The Vancouver Art Gallery has not offered Al Neil a retrospective. But these are different times. Nowadays buildings speak louder than sounds, pictures or words, and Neil's practice is not big and clean and vertical, but small, horizontal and messy — like the artist himself. Yet, Neil is not disappointed. To be disappointed is to have expectations, and the only expectations Neil ever had, he told me recently, were between him and the work.¹⁰

If this year's performance biennial is successful, it will do more than celebrate the life and art of Al Neil, it will make an argument for the kind of artist we once saw (and heard) more of, someone who explored the potential for convergence between mediums, someone for whom the object of being an artist is not what to make but how to make it. An artist at large, not some dead guy from nowhere who once played jazz piano.

Notes

1. The press kit I am referring to was given to me by Glenn Alteen, which was given to him by Carole Itter, last year.
2. Dollarton (or Dollar's Town, after its founder, the logger Robert Dollar) lies just east of the Second Narrows Bridge, on the north side, in an area laid claim to by the Burrard Inlet Band. It is also where Malcolm Lowry wrote much of *Under the Volcano*. In the Sixties, the Dollarton mudflats was the site of a showdown between the municipality of North Vancouver and a group of young squatters living in shacks. One of those shacks appears in Ian Wallace's seminal photo triptych "Melancholie de la Rue".
3. The collage is called "Doctor Bogoch's Conclusion" (1982).
4. I use the term "artist at large" after De Duve's use of it, in his essay "The Readymade and the Tube of Paint", from *Kant after Duchamp*, MIT: Cambridge, Mass., 1996.
5. The Cellar Jazz Club, where Neil led the house band.
6. — "Sacred & Profane", interview with Bill Smith, *Coda Magazine*, February, 1970.
7. "Horse Opera", from *Retrospective: 1965-1968, Al Neil Trio*, Blue Minor Records, 2001.
8. Neil mentions Sam Perry, Gary Lee Nova, and Dallas Selman, along with Intermedia, as artists he worked with.
9. Watson, Scott. "Three Masks for Al Neil", *Origins*, Vancouver: Western Front, 1989.
10. From a documentary interview, shot at the artist's home, July 17, 2005.



The respectful tourist on tour. Notes from the Junkie Library.

Throw a stone soaked in bleach at Main and Hastings. You'll hit a cop or a service provider or one of those missionary kids. Fascinated with the authentic junkie. Fascinated with the lengths of crack tubing and a flood of clean needles, sterile water in nicely stacked plastic, alcohol swabs. Star junkies come from white, middle class families. Fallen angels. Model minority addicts make movies about using, write poetry, speak discursively, pass Humanities 101.

Fascinated.

You are an informed bystander. You read the newspaper editorials. You understand the discourse. "Four Pillars." "Harm reduction." Someone came to talk about addiction in your class. You wrote a paper.

You are an activist. You go to meetings. You actively attempt to recruit authentic voices to your meetings. You write articles. You plan protests. You go to protests.

You are an artist. You do art that relates to social issues. You teach about social issues. You draw pictures of the oppressed and place them in public spaces. You talk about your oppression. You talk about someone else's oppression.

You are a service provider. You counsel addicts. You give out food and needles.

You are in government. You were elected. You were hired. You are paid to go to meetings. You write policy. You fund things for addicts.

You were an addict.

You are an addict.

Your father, mother and sister are addicts.

We all come to Main and Hastings reserve just to see what dying's really like.

This tour begins at the junkie library.

This land stretches white space over red land. Europeans stole land and created reserves where Hell's Angels run coke, steal girls, and the government sells liquor and dispenses

benzo-diazepines and anti-depressants to keep you in your home. No one who didn't grow up on the reserve goes out of their way to see a reserve.

Main and Hastings is a reserve stretching white space over red land. A reserve isn't about addiction. It's about stolen land. A reserve is about containing what we don't want to see.

Hastings reserve is one of many stops you can make across the country. Drugs are equal opportunity whether you are in Seaton House, stepped over on the way to the Calgary stampede, passed out in Kenora.

The city zoned addicts into this part of town. You can do crack from Cambie to Clark, keep it to the industrial districts or we'll have to involve meetings with community policing centres and the health unit.

Containment. It's all about containment.

Some academic said we have a drug problem because we are a port town. Really, Vancouver is a frontier town. Cowboys and cowboys and cowboys and sheriffs and missionaries and "Indians" and everyone else. That's right, Shanghai noon. That one time Jackie Chan made a Western.

Out West, we forget. We stole the land. We hired "indentured servants", politely, yellow slaves who built the railroad. We made internment camps. And we still hire indenturedly. Because when it's not black and sometimes red, it's hard to think that those other colours are problems for Europeans too. We prefer to think of our problems as resources and cheap open markets.

Yes, junkies have a colour, and a gender, and a religion. And some of us on this tour don't want to talk about colour and stolen land. All services are not equally distributed to all people.

Look, whites have problems. Whites left Europe too. The English oppress the French, you know, the irishdoukabourukraniancatholicfrench-question. I don't care if you're ten kinds of white or purple or green. Can we just get back to the main issue, class. Class war. Drugs. Cops. The literature at hand.

Junkie literature. Junkie Library.

The library was made by authentic junkies, who may have deliberately wanted to choose books for

by Ga Ching Kong

Hell's Angels

a library. Or someone needing a bus ticket to sell, or someone who was bored while they were waiting to do free laundry. The faces who chose these books may also have been Native, African, Latin American. But no one really suspects the Chinese, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Korean, Arab, Indian from India. Yes, we're here too.

This library was brought to you by the authentic junkie. The books of choice of addicts. Junkie literature. The first junkie literature that comes to mind are beat poets. Think of how many of the great Western writers of the world were addicted.

Gees, that's a long list of men.

Gees, that's a long list of white men.

Do junkies only read only white men too? Do only white junkies write?

That's why we call it a ***Nova Library***. Like William S. Burroughs' *Nova Express*. You know aliens are taking over our language. Now, we're talking about green racism. Green racism, folks.

Some artists were addicted and wrote bad, I mean beat poetry. It's obvious.

But I'll make a proper sociological case for the junkie canon.

The Hastings Reserve junkie canon:

witch hunts

industrialization

colonization

genocide

opium wars

drug wars

global expropriation

slavery

Men raping children.

Men beating on women.

Men raping women.

Women beating on children.

It's thousands and thousands of years of oppression. Burroughs is a thousand miles from that Native guy doing the residential school lam.

Privileged people, know what you've done. Check your ego, Burroughs. All of us on tour have something to answer for.

Wipe that garbage off your hands.

Safe library. Safe space. Safe injection site.

Is a public library not enough because addicts can't go there? Because books walk. Because the books in a regular library represent regular people. Because addicts speak only in the language of addicts.

If we can prove that addicts are educable, then we prove addicts are citizens. If we prove that an addicts' library gives addicts a moral life, then we can take the credit for saving addicts. Is the artist leading the addict out of the cave of false consciousness?

Will an addicts' library be the first world democratic Jesus we've always wanted. Does an addicts' library save society. If we can be so humble as to accept being saved by addicts, will addicts save society?

But addicts didn't author this conception. A clever artist conceived on a three hour tour that addicts read, addicts think, addicts muse, addicts create.

Plato, shine a light this way. A reserve is not a cave. A reserve is a physical manifestation of Platonic superiority. Education will get you off the reserve. Education will take you out of the cave. Sugar daddy's gonna give you something if you just stay where you are. We made you. We'll break you.

Consciousness is a cave and inclusion is a house of multiple coloured cannons. Another cannon for your house, Master. An addict's cannon. Like a black cannon. A red cannon. A yellow cannon. A Neil Bissoondath canon. The Canadian conflation crisis. A whimpering canon for the white man's junkie.

Is a junkie library a privileged fat man through the eye of the needle?

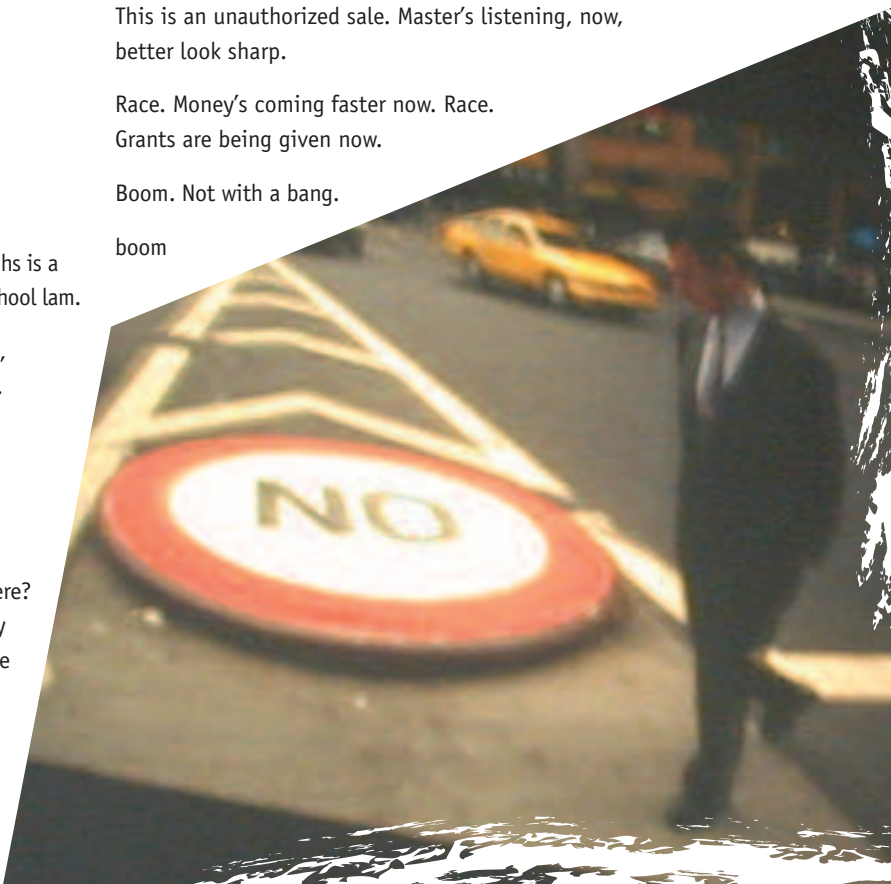
It's all caves and houses here, folks. Buying now earns huge reward points in heaven. Act now. Redeem your points now. Redeem.

\$50,000 for the master's tools, \$500,000 for the master's house. This is an unauthorized sale. Master's listening, now, better look sharp.

Race. Money's coming faster now. Race. Grants are being given now.

Boom. Not with a bang.

boom



Transcendence through the Artifice of Spectacle

For this year's LIVE, Martin Beauregard's press release states: *Fireworks investigates the dimension forgotten by the spectacle (entertainment), its failure (defeat)... us[ing] the subtlety... of the deceit and the guile, mixing participation and laziness... the artist accentuates... a reflection on certain values conveyed by "the society of the spectacle (entertainment)... bringing to mind those interminable slideshows of vacation trips... the installation creates interplay of contradictions between the sensational, cheapness, and emotion...*¹

Beauregard's performances "flirt with disaster: reckless inventions, scenery that falls apart, half finished machinery that explodes... Failure looms large; success is not an option." It is his intention to "wipe out wonder and make a big deal out of nothing!" He is a perfect choice for LIVE 2005, and the festival's theme of "altered states".

Beauregard's work is influenced by the performance group, *Survival Research Laboratories*, which uses the spectacle of explosions within work that reminds us of salvage yards, robot wars and visual arts. Beauregard is taken with their "Utopia of

Machines" which creates spectacles of disaster and degradation, with, ironically, tedious and destructive content.

Beauregard's previous work is child-like, using papier-mâché, packing tape, corrugated foam and other low cost materials for his costumes, props and sets. It is full of over-the-top, brightly coloured, costumes that seem like homemade mascots, and in them, his performances are very stunt-like, seemingly more stylized than meaningful. It is clear that Beauregard has thought about his works and conceptualized their profundity (or lack thereof) with some self-awareness and

humour. It is also evident that these garish, amateurish and stunt-like elements are intended as part of Beauregard's reflections on art, performance and society in its current state.

For *Fireworks*, the artist is interested in slides as presentation, in the sense of reviewing memories or souvenirs, because of their motionless or static aspect. He hopes to suggest the memory of archaic cinema, or to inform a journey as was popular in the 70s. He feels that, unlike photography, slide projection allows for group imagination, creating a story, a route, and a continuity of time, preserved statically.



It is hoped that as one enters the piece, it will initially surprise, be seen as ridiculous, a powerful trick lost in the weakness of its translation. One's balloon will burst. Some may try to analyze what's behind it (literally and figuratively). The curious will check behind the screen, then the performer will be revealed, creating the simulation, lifting the veil, the end of OZ, exposing the artifice. Some will experience it like a state of dream, reflection, oneiric, intimate or calming. The piece is intended to create distance, wavering between enchantment and disenchantment. It could also be seen as humorous.

Impotence and fate are recurrent subjects for this artist: costumes, objects, machines, all built in a spirit of whimsy, and his fascination with explosions. Beauregard confesses that, "The idea of failure is always present in my work... The more that it misses, the more it succeeds! It is the idea of the hardly finished machine, which explodes. I put accent rather on the disproportion of the effort..."

In French, the word fireworks is translated from *feux d'artifices*, meaning artificial fire — although the fire is real. Similar to magic, fireworks dazzle and deceive their audiences. The idea of the artificial spectacle is inherent to its name and substance. Beauregard's *Fireworks* represents or exposes this artifice in more obvious ways. The fireworks are a means to divert or hijack the viewer through spectacle, distorting the spectator's state.

Rather than creating a spectacular experience (experiment) of delight, Beauregard wishes to create a critical distance for viewers, inducing a state of reflection, such that they take the time to be conscious of the piece's inaction and irony, enabling a sense of memory and its souvenir. He sought old technology to "rock the state enchanted with the crowd", to highlight the unique quality of fireworks events, and to elicit a second reading: a caricature or parody of the state of the spectator. It remains to be seen if the intent of the piece will be received; however, Beauregard is on an intriguing path, with time and more experimentation with materials and process, he will become a spectacle in his own right.

1. All quotes taken from Beauregard, M. (2005) "LIVE 2005 Press Release".



by velveeta krisp pam Hall & Margaret Dragu

Marginalia... Velveeta Krisp interviews Pam Hall and Margaret Dragu.

Marginalia is a cross-country collaborative investigation into the politics of place, power, and position as experienced by Pam Hall and Margaret Dragu: two self proclaimed "middle-aged hot broads". Hall, an installation artist from St. John's, and Dragu, a performance artist from Vancouver, have been creating *Marginalia* together since February of 2004.

The physical manifestation of their work takes the form of 12"x12" textile squares, but the heart of their collaborative process lies in the daily email exchanges where they inspire each other by sharing the intimacies of their daily lives. Their relationship reminds me of lovers. The level of understanding and honesty, trust and respect, for each other is profound.

PH: Came from the obvious place... Both on the margins physically, geographically, etc. etc. etc.... But for me, what holds in the title is the female "sound" of it... It sounds not only like genitalia, labia, but for some reason like a mysterious sexual part of the female body that perhaps we have not discovered yet... Very weird perhaps, but I love the sound of the word in my mouth...

VK: The F word?

PH: Do you mean Fuck? Fun? Feminist? Frenzy? I like all those words... Yes — we talk about sex a lot... Doesn't everybody? Perhaps the difference in sexual dialogue/discourse/gossip/conversation when one is "middle-aged" is that it takes place within a context of history and deep knowledge about one's body, which is

often absent in younger women... Or perhaps M. and I are simply more reflective and interrogative than many other women our age... Though in my experience, many women reaching middle-age and "freed" from reproductive responsibilities, re-engage their sexuality and sexual identity with new interest, new insight, and new sense of both what they desire/want/need coupled with the knowledge and experience of how to "get it"... The other side of that, of course, is the notion that as women age they become sexually "invisible", so perhaps this also fuels some of our conversation around this topic, especially since we are both "in the business" of making meaning "visible"...

PH: I tend to talk about sexuality with all kinds of folks... With M. though, I suspect I have been gifted with an opportunity to share my own experience of sex, the erotic, etc.... That was not present in other work I made around this subject... So this is more personal, more tied to the questions I am asking myself at this particular historical moment in my life, as a single woman who is more rather than less "sexual" as I age... In that context, this conversation with M. is deeply important in ways that have little to do with "art" or whatever public performance we might make... Like all art practice, the best "stuff" is that which transforms the Artist... This project has been a magnificent "gift" to me... As a woman and an artist... Who knew???

VK: Since February 2004 you have made this commitment, there is something almost religious in nature about it . . .

PH: Ritualistic, spiritual in a way... I worry about the word religious... But I suspect you are on the right track seeing those elements of ritual, repetition, deep committed practice... It holds this ground of choice and decision, which reminds me of other deep





relationships... Love is after all both a feeling and a decision... The decision that M. and I have made to make work together seems also like a decision to make a friendship together... To build some history together... To be present to one another over time and distances... As witness, as ally, as correspondent... Very powerful responsibility, and I am constantly amazed and still curious about why this friendship in art seems so “easy” when friendships in life can be so difficult to sustain...

VK: Is there something highly overrated about being physically close to someone?

PH: ABSOLUTELY.

VK: What kind of physicality are you experiencing in the process?

PH: The touch of fabric, the sewing and ironing, and “making” of squares which has become my way of “speaking” or writing letters to her... The reaching and grasping for a beach detritus to “send” to M. embedded in a square... The occasional sound of her voice on the phone, our rare moments of real presence together in the same place... Montreal, St. John’s... The cooking, the walking together, the small touches exchanged...

VK: Do you also “confess your dependency/addiction/need for this medium”?

MD: The squares/carres are an oasis or meditation or grounding to me. I often feel overpowered by daily responsibilities and actions (verbing, biking, teaching, personal training, meeting, filing, phoning, scheduling, shopping, cooking, emailing) and rush towards a session of square-making as a place I can let it out or let it in or just spend precious alone time or find my emotional centre by articulating something to Pam through the medium of squares/carres.

VK: Clarify verbing please.

MD: Love verbs. In Spanish, verbs do a major workload of communication as speakers often drop personal pronouns. In the '70's, in modern dance, we employed word and action games

(a chance device) as a device to find fresh movement, sources, and to escape “classic modern dance”. This came from a zeitgeist of “art as thinking” and responded to experimenters/leaders, like Merce Cunningham working with John Cage, choreographer Anna Halprin, Yvonne Rainer, & other choreographers/artists like Carolee Schneeman, and choreographers working closely with visual artists in the time of conceptual artists i.e. Sol Lewitt and the line drawings, spiral jetty, etc. I am not nostalgic for that era but I see/feel it grounds/informs me. Anyways, the verbing (listing/documenting) everyday kinetics is an action I return to as a starting point, not frequently but regularly returning to it as a source for something...

MD: Pam and I are logging verbs for ourselves and for each other, and every once in awhile we send each other a verb log in an email/rant of what we are doing. It is perhaps these verb logs that helped us see we both share a love of labour (ours, each others, and other women's labour — see the embroidery and lace on the found serviettes/pillowcases/hankies that we employ in our squares/carres)...

VK: What if you both decide to not sew the squares together! But to throw them from the highest building? Do you think of these possibilities? Or does the activity itself ground you in the moment?

MD: I do sometimes wonder what it would be like to not make squares but it seems sad and far away — like death/taxes/dentist bills/rrsps and all that jazz — a far away someday kinda thing in the future so I ostrich and try not to worry...

VK: What do you not know about this piece, *Marginalia*?

PH: Where it will lead? What else I will learn from it? What the performance will “look like”? Who else might find meaning or resonance from our process and how we determine to render it visible?



Irene Loughlin

Performing Anxiety: Irene Loughlin's Olympic Bid

Nadia Commenicci's Olympic performance on the parallel bars is an image that strikes me deeply. The actual image of Nadia in real time is lost to me, but I recall an impression I have of her in a 1984 made-for-TV movie, which contained the actual footage of her performance. Perhaps it was the Olympic footage married with elements of Nadia's made-for-TV life of defection and eating disorder that made her image hold firmly in my mind. After seeing this movie I remember saying to my dad with great sincerity, "I want to be a gymnast". He replied with expected parental excitement, but without the requisite gymnastic lessons required to make me "just like Nadia", a phrase I would use repeatedly during childhood, after declaring my hope for Olympic gold. I wanted nothing more than to be a part of this, but our large family had little money to spare for gymnastic programs. I settled for makeshift balance beams (logs on the beach) and eventually the idea of being a gymnast faded away -- But, did I want to *be a gymnast* or did I want to *be just like Nadia*? In my mind there was no separation between these two ideas; I like to blame television for this confusion: To be a gymnast was to be like Nadia. The image of a gymnast, indeed Nadia's image, is an image of grace and agility, certainly, the image of strength and girlhood.

During that time of cold war anxieties, Nadia's success as a gymnast proved inspiring to young girls everywhere. From 1976 on, there was a significant rise in young girls' participation in gymnastic programs in places where gymnastics had previously had minor followings. Performance artist Irene Loughlin's own fascination with Nadia found her briefly in gymnastics during this time. Although she says, "my time on the balance beam or parallel bars found me frozen in space with a terrible fear of falling and dying". Indeed things could have been very different for Loughlin, as well as for myself, if the gymnastics 'thing' had worked out. For instance, maybe the gymnastics lessons that I so desired would have began an early childhood attack on the clumsy adult I would end up being. Maybe I could have become a better, stronger, and more graceful woman — a better mind, a better body, a better job, a better car. If I had all of these things I could have a better life and a better me.

It seems we are all looking to be better. Our lives rest in the tension between personal goals, social ideals and the people we actually are. Loughlin addresses this tension

in her performance work and commented in an interview with me last April,

Currently, I'm very interested in the ways we put pressure on ourselves socially and how we're influenced to be perfect in so many ways, both physically and mentally, in order to fit some homogenous aesthetic that's set up for us. But I don't think any of us can ever reach or live up to it. I want to explore those ideas in a humorous and ironic way.

Her work consistently draws from images of human perseverance and the experience of meeting the body's own limitations. Her new work for the Live Biennial 2005 in Vancouver proposes to extend these themes in a piece inspired by Olympic images from her childhood, Nadia Commenicci and her 'perfect 10' in the 1976 Olympics.

This piece will display a large video projection of Nadia's famous Olympic performance with a balance beam situated in front. She has hired a team of young female gymnasts and their coach to perform in front of the projection. Beneath the beam, a news-reel style text bar will relay portions of Commenicci's real life story.

The piece isolates several moments of human struggle for perfection. Nadia's struggle to achieve perfection sets the precedent for athletic young women. The young girls performing in the piece are caught in the same moment, in the same struggle. As a background conversation, Loughlin's piece, set in Vancouver, seizes the city in a moment of similar tension: to become the perfect Olympic City by 2010. Referring to the city's successful Olympic bid, Loughlin says, "This accomplishment is largely publicly celebrated whereas the public fallout from such an event results in housing crises and other pressures on low income areas. This is largely ignored".

The human struggle to achieve perfection is an issue woven into Loughlin's overall work as a performance artist. This current piece initiates Loughlin's original conversation between the individual and social expectation and introduces the idea of a city wide 'reach' for the perfection. It captures Vancouverites in a strange moment, where they are 'reaching' for better lives. It's the reach, the moment of tension, caught in the act of trying, that's the most intriguing point.



by Yani Kong

Tangible metaphors

"One great thought can alter the future of the world. One revelation. One dream. But who will dream that dream? And who will make it real?" Ben Okri, *Infinite Riches*. [1998, Orion Books Ltd.] pp. 5

"We go on living as if history is a dream. The miracle is that we go on living and loving as best we can in this enigma of reality." Ben Okri, *Infinite Riches*. [1998, Orion Books Ltd] pp. 394

History seems to tell us one story of redemption over and over — the one where we try to start all over again with a clean slate, a new space, an empty(ied) map, the New World — not realizing the dirt we track in on our feet. At one time we imagined the Internet to be this empty space, a promised land for the free exchange of ideas unfettered by physical difference, distance, or market interests; anyone could be anything, do anything, in this abstract networked space.

The utopic dream was dispelled as reality appeared in the cracks where materiality and immateriality co-mingle. Such a complete historical break with the continuum of our social and economic relations was not possible. We forgot that the Internet, in its "virtuality", was tied to the production and assembly of silicon chips, wires, and a language of translation (0's and 1's). The ephemera of online communication became the exchange of goods, capital, and other social relations; this "free" space was restricted to those within the privileged seats of the global economic order.

Despite ongoing suspicion, the tools and trades of modern technology remain the dominant lens through which we transform our world and ourselves. In this particular technological paradigm "how" and "by whom" remains largely differentiated from "what" and "for whom", so that the consequences of our creative and consumptive actions may be concealed from us or at least held at a considerable distance. (Perhaps that between first and third world paradigms)

The work produced under the artists' umbrella, KIT, engages with the inter-related dimensions of technology and social life. KIT is a framework for collaborations among architects, writers, artists and programmers.

The group is made up of collaborators

and core members in Canada, Australia and the UK, and intentionally avoids gendered and identifiable authorship. Projects are developed and actualized from a range of perspectives and locations. The group uses various forms of online communication to plan and realize projects.

One theme that reoccurs throughout their collaborative projects is an exploration of how the intangible and tangible interact in the context of communications media like the Internet. KIT tends to tie online activity with "real-world" events. In their latest project, *Infrasense*, they use a fusion of art installation with a web-based interactive art component to link the virtual with the concrete.

Infrasense is a collaboration with Robert Saucier which draws upon the computer virus metaphors of the 'Trojan horse' and 'bug' to "take concepts from the digital world, render them as physical objects and then return control of the physical objects back to the digital landscape of the world wide web". In this interactive installation the participant encounters several robotic Trojan horses and large bugs which are interfaced with a website that participants can interact with. The web-based interaction implicates the user in the creation of a computer bug or virus. This activity is articulated in the gallery through the generation of sound and movement of bugs in relation to the Trojan horses. The artists hope to draw attention to the experience of dissociation and distance that inhabiting digital space instantiates by extending virtual concepts into the physical domain of the gallery.

The metaphor of 'bug' or 'virus' was brought to life by computer hackers and, with *Infrasense*, Kit shows how this metaphor becomes a real presence with consequences that effects virtual and physical reality. In this way *Infrasense* functions as a sort of self-referential mirror that links the intangibility of social values and online activity with concrete materials and manifestations. It shows us that what we create and how we interpret that creation is a reflection of ourselves, our values, and beliefs. Real events spark metaphors. Metaphors become real virtual bugs that produce real consequences in our tangible world. Engaging with this web of relations is the beginning of understanding more about ourselves, and what we are dreaming into existence.

by Michelle Irving



Infrasense

by Daina Warren

David Neel



The Ten Commandments of David Neel

January 5 - 29 2005

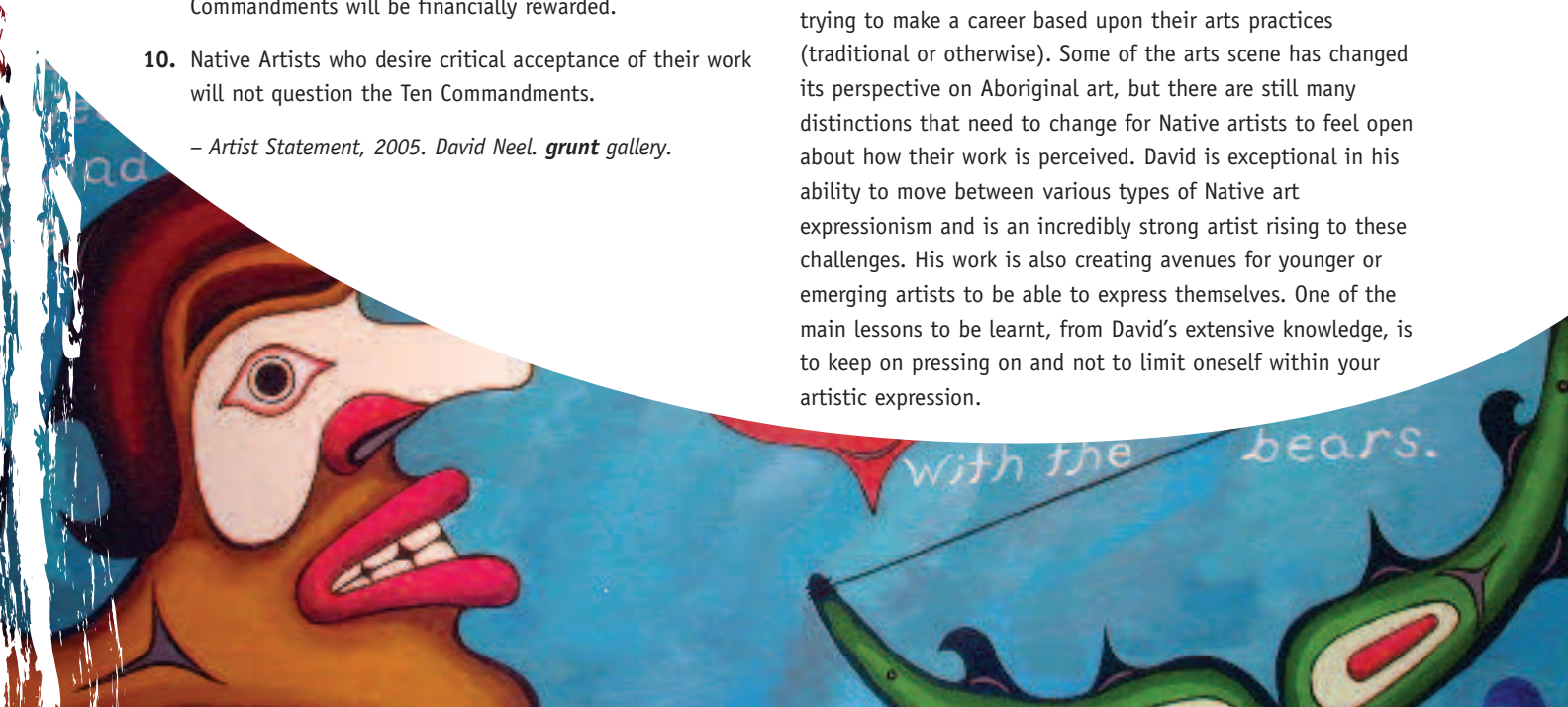
1. Native Art will be defined by experts: anthropologists, curators and art historians. Native Americans will be allowed to participate, in token numbers.
2. The history of Native Art will be defined by experts, trained in non-native institutions. Their ideas will be published, taught and accepted as fact.
3. The market for Native Art will be primarily decorative in nature. Challenging or provocative topics are to be avoided.
4. Commercially successful Native Art will reflect and reinforce the romanticized, historic view of Native Indian culture. Rare, token exceptions to this rule will be allowed.
5. Native Art will be restricted to topics of the natural world, tribal history and legends.
6. Public institutions and commercial galleries will support Native Artists who reinforce existing academic theory in their work, and avoid contemporary content, ie: treaty making, the environment or residential school.
7. There will be a distinct separation between traditional Native Artists and contemporary Native Artists; the two will always exhibit separately.
8. The work of the traditional Native Artist will be a form of tribal expression and is not to be used as an outlet for personal expression.
9. Non-compliance with the Ten Commandments will have a financial penalty. Native Artists who follow the Commandments will be financially rewarded.
10. Native Artists who desire critical acceptance of their work will not question the Ten Commandments.

– Artist Statement, 2005. David Neel. *grunt* gallery.

David Neel's exhibition, at **grunt**, took place January 5 to 29, 2005. The work was infused with aspects unique to David's Kwakwaka'wakw culture but also incorporated the forms as a basis to create a 'current' vision of the stories of his people. Many of the characters and forms in the paintings were from the ancient stories. These characters embodied the work with their coloring, lines, dimension and forms. The spiritual quality of the work challenged the viewer's conservative influences creating a connection to both an aboriginal and formal arts background; this work represented a perspective that blends traditional Aboriginal culture and contemporary art practices. Through painting the artist looked to re-investigate these characters and stories bringing them a new life in this contemporary setting. These works are a vision of transcendence, one that expresses Native Culture moving through time and evolving. David emphasized this experience by painting the traditional form lines, ovoid and u-shapes in styles that combine European painting methods with the North West coast styled images and ideology.

Much of North West Coast Arts are based upon a definitive arrangement of form lines and shapes; traditions that are meant to keep the art true to its basis. David is no exception to these rules. He has been gifted with the customs of North West coast art and culture through his family, his grandmother Ellen Neel, his grandfather master carver Charlie James, his uncle Mungo Martin, his mother Ellen and his father David, and by studying past artworks of his ancestors.

David Neel is breathing life into these traditions by bringing them to the surface of the canvas, and showing that these stories still have relevance to Indigenous people; that remembering history and culture is important. David's **Ten Commandments** (or rules on Aboriginal culture and art) represent a history of First Nations art and each point reflects an experience David has seen his artistic peers endure when trying to make a career based upon their arts practices (traditional or otherwise). Some of the arts scene has changed its perspective on Aboriginal art, but there are still many distinctions that need to change for Native artists to feel open about how their work is perceived. David is exceptional in his ability to move between various types of Native art expressionism and is an incredibly strong artist rising to these challenges. His work is also creating avenues for younger or emerging artists to be able to express themselves. One of the main lessons to be learnt, from David's extensive knowledge, is to keep on pressing on and not to limit oneself within your artistic expression.



Rebecca Belmore



Courtesy of Pari Nadimi Gallery

From Untitled and East to West the March of Mary March.

June 10 - July 30, 2005

1.

I am writing this for the viewers of art.

There are no art-words. There are no art-words to articulate the ring. There are no art-words to articulate the fire. There are no art-words to articulate the body. There are no art-words to articulate the journey. There are no art-words to articulate the ceremony. There are no art-words to articulate the creation.

The Artist is not the ceremony. The Art is not the ceremony. The ceremony is not the art. My response is not as a 'proper viewer' of the art; my response comes from an entirely older place. My response is based in my mitochondrial DNA, the connectivity in my blood to the beginning times of indigenous people. I tell stories as a way to relate to the story that the artist tells, and not to direct or describe the works - that is not the point; to tell stories echoes the lessons taught by my elders, and will help us to enter into the chain of traditional legacy that creates wholeness.

I reflect on what I see in the exhibition, not as the point of the action, but as a voice to acknowledge the process. I do this because I am in relation to this story of the art.

2.

In the exhibition are six large photographs. Three are pictures of a native woman in various poses. In each of the three photographs she is in various positions and wrapped in white cloth. The other three photographs are pictures of fire, large circles of fire on a black background.

When I walked into the room this is how I saw it...

When I walked into the room, the first thing I feel is the energy of "Speaking to the Mother" - the performance of Rebecca's using the giant megaphone, a performance that was taken to different First Nations communities across Canada. Whenever I see Rebecca's work, I always feel the energy of "Speaking to the Mother" because the performance was a powerful work.

It allowed the people, through interaction with the work, to be able to make a connection, or re-connection, to the mother on a physical plain. Their voices traveled along the landscape to fill up what was missing from the landscape. On the occasions that I've heard stories about the performance, it has been like I am living that connected experience as well.

Then in the room, I sense Rebecca's grandmother. She's sitting in the corner of the gallery, in a comfortable chair, working on something small, like beadwork. I try to look closer but I don't want to disturb her - even though I suspect that she wouldn't mind the company. I have a strong desire to go into the kitchen at the **grunt** gallery to make her some tea and sit with her but I don't because I have no beadwork to work on.

Then in the room I sense Mary March - She is one of the older stories, one of the oldest stories. Her Beothuck name, in English, is Desmaduit. She was one of the last Beothuck First Nations, captured by New-Found-Land-ers as a way to build a bridge to the history of the island. They weren't looking for her. They just took her. When she was captured she lost everything. Placed in the house of a prominent Newfoundland citizen, she lost her baby, her husband, her community, and her freedom. In later historical recounts of Desmaduit, written by the colonists who had the timely opportunity to interact with her, Mary is described as being bright, clever, funny, that there is something intelligent behind her eyes. When I read these descriptions I relate a story about one of my aunties. There is no mistaking the resemblance. I am in relation to the story. I see one of my aunties, then I see her being taken by force away from us, and her husband being killed trying to negotiate with the captors, then I see my baby cousin dying from the grief of losing her mother at such a young age. Desmaduit was captured in March so they gave her the last name March. At the end she had lost her community and her life and now all that remains of her is 'just description'.

When I see the photos of rings of fire I hear Johnny Cash singing "Ring of Fire". It's a great song. I remember my mom, one time, trying so desperately to make Johnny Cash more than just part Indian. She was desperate to make it happen. She argued for days and days. It was like, through her use of language, the combination of the words and

by Peter Morin

arguments used, and lists of relations who agreed with her, Johnny could be made into a one hundred percent Indian. I think it's safe to say that Johnny Cash could have been chief of any Indian Nation he wanted.

When I see the photos of a woman wrapped in white cloth I am reminded of my strong friend Mary, whom I miss very much. She stayed with my family during her time at the hospital. When I look at these three pictures I am reminded of her struggle, and the positions that she had to go through because she was sick. Mary had a very powerful light, one that never diminished — even now. These three pictures make me think of her medical experiences, and about Mary being held in a white medical wrapping to heal her wounds, heart, tears, and trauma.

3.

Our aunty is named Demasduit/Mary/[Rebecca].

Demasduit/Mary/[Rebecca] is the first Aboriginal Woman to represent Canada.

My work often deals with the elusive quality of memory. I am aware of what disappears with language. The importance of the act of remembering becomes essential in works that are often created as memorials.

— Artist statement by Rebecca Belmore¹.

How do people read across cultures? What are the aims and consequences of their readings? How are the readings located in a certain history, say that of American Indian and Euro-American interrelations? Is there a way that people can read across cultures so that intercultural communication is opened rather than closed, so that people see more than just what things seem to be? — by Greg Sarris, from *Keeping Slug Woman Alive*².

Love Is A Burning Thing And It Makes A Fiery Ring. Bound By Wild Desire. I Fell Into A Ring Of Fire. I Fell Into A Burning Ring Of Fire. I Went Down, Down, Down. And The Flames Went Higher. And It Burns, Burns, Burns. The Ring Of Fire. — from "The Ring Of Fire." Lyrics by June Carter Cash and Merle Kilgore³.

There are nine bodies in this story of this ceremony for our aunty's body, Mary March. There is our aunty's body; that's one. There is our aunty's body on display; that's two. There is our aunty's body dressed for the funeral; that's three, four and five. There is our aunty's fire, her spiritual body, that's six, seven, and eight. There is our body, nine.

Rebecca has made this ceremony for her traveling and for our remembering. Rebecca has made her body for us to see. There are three versions of her body dressed in rings of fire, and there are three versions of her body each wrapped in white thread. These are the bodies for her journey. These are the bodies of her remembering. Rebecca has invited us to enact our blood memory role of grieving and celebrating.

This art is a ceremony of fire, a struggle of historical and emotional paths. This art is memory, a remembering of the way of paths. It is our responsibility to be open to the possibilities of this work, to reflect on the stories of its making, and to be aware of who the maker is. That is the point.

There is an old tree⁴. She told me there is a tree. She told me there is a tree. She called it *Tamarindus Indica*⁵. She told me that this tree is where we should put our colonialism — by its roots. In the story she tells we go there to pray and to wash away our sins - but not in the Jesus way. In the story of grief I want to tell for my Aunty Mary, I go to that tree to pray, burn tobacco, and to wash away my grief - but not in the Jesus way. I go there to remember her in the way that I was taught to remember. This starts with sitting in silence, sitting by the roots of this tree, sitting by the roots and by this colonialism. In the sitting I get my practice. In the story my aunty Mary was taken from the world. The story I want to tell about Mary is medicine against colonialism. In my quiet I feel the grief come out of my mouth. I let it have the power of a powerful river. It washes out of my mouth towards the roots of the tree. Together, we are washed.

I sit and shake.

I sit and pray.

I sing the proper songs for my aunty.

1. Belmore, R. (2005). "Artist Statement. From *Untitled and East to West the March of Mary March*." **grunt** gallery press release. Vancouver, BC.

2i. Sarris, G. (1993). *Keeping Slug Woman Alive. A Holistic Approach to American Indian Texts*. University of California Press, Berkeley, CA. p. 3.

3. Cash, J. (3/25/63). *Ring of Fire. The best of Johnny Cash*. Columbia Records.

4. See Toni Morrison's (1987.) *Beloved*. [Penguin, New York.] I am referring to the "tree" that grew on Sethe's back, marks of beatings remaining as a testimony to slavery, on the African woman's body.

5. In Dionne Brand's (1999) book, *At the full and change of the moon*. [Vintage Canada, Toronto.], she tells the story of Private Soane, who daily visits the *Tamarindus Indica* tree on his return from fighting a useless British war.



David Kahane

by Glenn Alteen



Linea Lingua

Glenn Alteen Interviews

David Khang

May 6 - 28, 2005

GA: Let's start with race and the writing of race and this is a huge and well traversed territory. Is this about the idea of cultural memory? How does *Linea Lingua* fit into the large mass of work on the writing of race?

DK: Cultural memory, on some level, is intertwined with cultural amnesia, as well as nostalgia which I like to define as 'remembering things as they never were'. What is forgotten and remembered always changes the past and its trajectory into the future. The resulting slippages make artistic renewal possible for me. In the art context, the way I remember and reference the Fluxus era of artistic production (Paik, Kubota, Young), is not an attempt to recover and pay homage to some gloriously experimental moment in art history, but rather re-imagining politics and poetics today, tempered by the gravity of more recent histories. *Linea Lingua* began as a visceral response to the events and milieu after 9/11, when I began my graduate studies at UC Irvine and culminated in its inclusion in my thesis project. As part of my thesis writing, I relied significantly on the works of Said, Spivak, and Derrida; all three, in person and in writing, exhibit resolute and unmitigated concern for 'the Other'. Taking the works of these authors together, one cannot look at race by itself; the writing of race is inextricably complicated by the matrix of sex, gender, and class. So race becomes one component of *Linea Lingua*. Yet it is not, in my process and in intent, a one-to-one transcribing of theory into praxis. If that were so, there would be no risk-taking, no renewal in and through art.

GA: I think it's interesting you said class, because class is an area that hasn't been evoked in the post 9/11 scenario. And I think class, as an issue, has faded from view while race, sex and gender just seem to get more and more complex. Notions of 'the Other' which is so front and centre in these ideas has very different implications when you talk about class.

DK: As artists, we often do not foreground our own profoundly privileged class status. While the issue of class is talked of less, the effects of class structures continue to persist. Who is killed in the Iraq War? The Iraqis, of course, and the American poor who enlist in the military (black, hispanic, but also the white poor, thus cutting across racial grain), all of which makes talking about race much more messy and tricky to navigate. Etienne Balibar speaks of a new 'racism' that encompasses all of these categories - of race, sex, gender, and class. While I feel that his use of the term is somehow imperfect, the spirit of its usage — that attempts to capture the complexity of this matrix

— is significant. For a long time now, we have known that we cannot talk about just one of these categories alone. Class is the difference that can slip quietly into the background, an assumed privilege that often goes unnoticed because of the foregrounding of the other categories, intentionally or not.

GA: Your new work seems to push that envelope further into cultural and sexual stereotypes. You make the queer reference within the paradigm of an Asian man, an attractive man in this anal pose with a paintbrush, but to me the reference reads much more scatological than queer. Mainly because of the ink, I suppose. I mean there are precursors to this: Ron Athey's and Bob Flannagan's performances and Matthew Barney's Vaseline works. It's interesting to note that only one of these artists is queer. And Athley's working out of a sense of the AIDS crisis, which has another, earlier, read on the anus. I think this image has the power to confuse people.

DK: Athey, Flannagan, and Barney are all good reference points to reflect on convergent and divergent readings. There are two axes at work here: if only one of these artists is queer, I would add that none of these artists is Asian. As noted, Nam June Paik and Shigeko Kubota are other references that I draw on more directly. Last year, my friend Nguyen Tan Hoang introduced me to an ad in *Details Magazine* featuring an Asian male model, the headline of which read: "Gay OR Asian?" My work, in part, addresses the stereotypical conflation of these two racial and gender categories as well as challenging the viewers' gaze, whether it be hetero- or homo-erotic, to ask: "what is the projection that might be involved here?" Am I performing a gender or a race, or both? My intention is not to reclaim a lost masculinity for Asian men, but rather to ask questions around the construction and performativity of race and gender. As for the scatological reading, I think about the title for the exhibition. "Oral-Fecal" is a medical term to describe a mode of infectious transmission, usually in kids who experiment with their poo, then... well, you get the picture. Kids of all ages, of course, play with these two areas of the body, far past the oral and anal stages of childhood development. It is a pairing that elicits at once disgust and pleasure. If Kubota challenged the works of male artists like Pollock, Klein, and Paik — by counterposing the female body's productivity to the masculine painterly gestures loaded with phallic symbolism, I want my work to be read against two forces. First, Asian calligraphy. Many practitioners believe in a link between male virility and the strength of his brush stroke, the brush tip standing in for the erect phallus. Through scatological markmaking, I aim to 'pollute' this phallocentrism. Second, I want to interrogate the white gaze, and how the Asian body, or for that matter, Asia as a body, is feminized (read Edward Said). And I do hope that there are other readings of my work as yet unnamed. I look forward to them.

A photograph of a blue wooden wall. At the top, there is a circular window with a blue frame and a red border. Below the window, a dark, circular object hangs from a ring. Further down, a dark, rectangular object hangs from a ring. At the bottom, a pile of light-colored sticks or wood is visible. The word "grunt" is written in a stylized font at the bottom of the image.

grunt at a Glance

FALL PROGRAM 2005

Installation:

THE TRIALS OF WONG FOON SING

Keith Langergraber

September 8 to October 1, 2005

Opening September 8 @ 8 p.m.

In conjunction with SWARM

September 29 at 8 p.m, Artist Talk

grunt gallery, SWARM Festival

Special Project:

THE NOVA LIBRARY

Hans Winkler

First Floor, Central Library @ 350 West Georgia St.

October 17 to November 26, 2005

Opening/Panel Discussion

October 17 at 7 p.m. @ Vancouver Public Library

THE AL NEIL PROJECT

October 15 to November 25, 2005

October 15 at 8 p.m. @ Western Front

A tribute to Al Neil

October 21 at 8 p.m. @ Vancouver Public Library

Under The Influence curated by Michael Turner

November 10 at 8 p.m. @ the Roundhouse Community Centre

New Orchestra Workshop Society and Coastal Jazz and Blues

co-present a concert featuring Al Neil's ultimate tribute band

November 25 at 9 p.m. @ the Vancouver Art Gallery

An event focusing on Neil's history in performance art

Performance:

FIREWORKS

Martin Beauregard

October 30 @ 8 p.m.

grunt gallery

Performance Installation:

MARGINALIA

Pam Hall and Margaret Dragu

November 4 to November 6, 2005

Opening November 3, 2005 @ 8 p.m.

grunt gallery

Performance:

NADIA

Irene Loughlin

November 16, 2005

3:30 to 5:30 p.m.

The SeaBus Terminal, Vancouver

Exhibition:

INFRASENSE

K.I.T. and Robert Saucier

November 12 to December 3, 2005

Opening Saturday November 12 @ 4 p.m.

grunt gallery

grunt gallery

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