

Atlas Sighed is a guerrilla exhibition of contemporary art. Working monumentally and secretly, the following artists took over billboards, bus shelters, telephone poles, newspapers, alleyways, administrative offices, cellphones, and the sky itself to realize this project: Dick Averns, Brittney Bear Hat, Steven Beckly, Victoria Braun, Bogdan Cheta, Alannah Clamp, CONSULTANCY GROUP, Ladies Invitational Deadbeat Society, Natalie Lauchlan, Yvonne Mullock and Mia Rushton, Sans façon, Dan Zimmerman, and others. This catalogue features writing by Derek Beaulieu, Mohammad Rezaei, Lindsay Sorell, and Marilyn Volkman. Curated by Steven Cottingham.

Page one

I have never been so depressed. I spent the summer doing lots of drugs. I got uppers from my friends, downers from my lovers, psychedelics from strangers, antidepressants from my psychiatrist, antibiotics from the clinic, and herbal supplements from my mother. More and more I felt like, if I wanted to make the world a better place, I needed to take myself out of it.

I don't know what I'm doing in this city, with its singular economy and nouveau riche inhabitants. I had a dream where God came down from the mountain and told me he would destroy this city, this Sodom and Gomorrah, with a pillar of lightless flame. For the life of me, I can't remember if he was offering a warning or a threat. I woke up before I could make it out of downtown.

When I started the first Calgary Biennial, I wanted to celebrate the city—drawing attention to the individuals who have made conscious decisions to live and work here, making it their home. I love these people, these artists who have forged a multifaceted and engaging community despite our municipality constantly being snubbed by peers in Toronto and Vancouver. I wanted to fight against this idea of a cultural backwater. Now, I don't know. Maybe outsiders have the clearest view of what we really are. The Calgary Sun threw a fit when our mayor raised a pride flag at City Hall. Our... (cont'd on page fifteen)

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Atlas Sighed: The 2014 Calgary Biennial was a guerrilla exhibition of contemporary art. Comprising numerous infiltrations into public space, this endeavour appropriated commercial vernaculars inherent to the urban landscape in order to challenge conservative status quos. Working monumentally and secretly, the following artists will be took over billboards, bus shelters, telephone poles, newspapers, alleyways, administrative offices, callighones, and the sky itself to realize this project: Dick Averns, Brittney Bear Hat, Steven Beckly, Victoria Braun, Bogdan Cheta, Alannah Clamp, CONSULTANCY GROUP, Ladies Invitational Deadbeat Society, Natalie Lauchlan, Yvonne Mullock and Mia Rushton, Sans facon, Dan Zimmerman, and others. Curated and coordinated by Steven Cottingham.
The Biennial was dispersed throughout Calgary and its suburbs from December 1, 2014 through to March 31, 2015. A number of conversations and public events were held in conjunction with this exhibition. This catalogue was designed and edited by Steven Cottingham.

calgarybiennial.ca/

This project was made possible by the receipt of an individual project grant from the Alberta Foundation for the Arts.



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Clockwise from top left: Let's fall in love and split the rent by Alannah Clamp appeared in the classifieds of the Calgary Herald throughout the month of December 2014. Selections from Steven Beckly's series Reunions—depicting historical portraits of same-sex couples—were placed in bus shelters and street-level ads throughout the city. Natalie Lauchlan's hand-embroidered About us banners were hung on opposite ends of the LRT line in the neighbourhoods of Canyon Meadows (SW) and Martindale (NW).

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Providing for our communities

Brittney Bear Hat's Blackfoot was installed on a billboard near the eponymous road and Glenmore Trail from December until March (image at top right). I met with her at Caffe Beano where we talked and drank coffee together.

Steven Cottingham Your work for the Biennial really draws attention to taken-for-granted naming conventions in Calgary. I was wondering about your thoughts in regards to the nomenclature of Blackfoot Trail, Peigan Trail, and Crowchild Trail, among others.

Brittney Bear Hat It feels sort of like a soft apology. From my interpretation, and from the experience of my peers, I kind of gathered that I wasn't really a gesture of pride. It was more paternalistic, like, here, we're going to do something for you guys and it's going to be really great. In some ways, it was just an easy way out. I guess I'm interested in that unknowingness... SC I thought your piece with the Crowfoot Liquor receipt was really powerful. It's so succinct. (Image at right)

BBH At first I just made it as a joke and I left it as a note for my sister. Later, she came up to me and we talked about it for a while. We spoke about how these stereotypes exist, portraying members of our culture as drunks, and we grew up thinking we were sort of a part of that because our parents had problems with alcohol. And I think that piece was a way to get that out without being too serious. I mean, at the time I wasn't really comfortable explaining my experience with alcohol.

SC You've said that this work and the Blackfoot image were part of an older body of work. Most recently, the work I saw coming out of your Wood Land School residency at The Banff Centre and your exhibition/residency with Contemporary Calgary was much more personal. I liked how this work reflected such a myriad of experiences, describing how your mother woke you up by blaring Biggie Smalls and when your dad taught you how to hunt by shooting at Coke cans (images at right).

BBH I've sort of transitioned away from making this work that had a lot to say socially and politically, using images gathered from Google, and dealing with my identity in a broader way. Lately I've been focusing inward a little more, finding out what is important for me to say as an individual, rather than what I feel is expected from me as an aboriginal or as a female. I mean, as much as that older work and those messages are important to me, I wanted to make work about my personal life. Also, I kept being told that "making Native work has already been done." I don't know how many times I've heard that. But, for me, living in Calgary, I really can't agree. There is still so much to do. These statements need to be made.

SC You're definitely not talking about things that are already accepted. The placenames are just one example, and serve as a metaphor for other activities happening in the city. So much is still taken for granted and there is still such a refusal to acknowledge the history of oppression and appropriation within mass culture. I think last time we met, we were talking a bit about the residency you did at Contemporary Calgary

and how you felt pressured to address your identity in a broader way, is that to say you felt discouraged from addressing your identity in a more intimate way?

BBH A little bit. I think it's because my peers were dealing with very political ideas and things happening outside of my community or realm of experience. Lots of academic quotes, examining iterations of the constitution, and working with mass protests. I felt like I had to find a way to belong. Sometimes it seemed like they wanted to make my work for me. SC The residency was originally titled *Aboriginal Women Making Work*, correct?

BBH Yes, but then we changed the name to *Deady Lady Art Triumvirate*. But, even with the new title, I felt like there were issues. I mean, I don't identify myself as an aboriginal artist nor as a female artist. I'm just an artist making work about things that matter to me. So, it was kind of awkward, because in the introduction to the exhibition catalogue, the curator mentioned that this was a trend she wanted to jump on. (I had long wanted to curate an exhibition of Aboriginal contemporary art but with an increase of exhibits addressing this subject across Canada, I felt this show needed to shine.) And it really felt that way, with the title and the set-up.

SC I feel like some of my friends are very adamant to claim their heritage and proclaim their work as part of a legacy, whereas other friends are very averse to self-identifying as anything more specific than an artist. In both cases, their work may deal with issues of identity, but they differ in how they choose to identify themselves. It's really up to them. It's tricky when identity is something other people craft for you. Not being in control of how you're perceived is so debilitating. A lot of power is lost when you aren't in control of your own labels or identity. Stereotypes arise because it's easier than actually listening to individuals. As humans, I feel like we're programmed to be efficient, to find ways of grouping commonalities, to seek out the lowest denominator. But this excludes so many important facets of the individual persona.

BBH I'm glad for the experience of working with these women and for the things we discussed in regards to working with identity. I remember talking to Brian Jungen in Banff and he told me to be truthful no matter what. He told me, "The stories you're telling me about your parents, these stories are what make you Native." That really excited me and I realized it was important that I told them, passed them on.

SC At the end of the *Deady Lady Art Triumvirate* show, I felt like your work was very much about sharing, whereas some of the other work was more about teaching—which is definitely not a 'wrong' approach at all and in fact I learned a lot from that exhibition. But because you were more about sharing individual experiences about childhood and adolescence it felt like you wanted to provide opportunities for others to relate, rather than using your experiences as case studies for a didactic approach.

BBH Right. My dad has always been very open about his history, and I think that passing stories on is a really important part of Aboriginal culture. I remember showing him my work and the only thing he told me was, "This is what you're supposed to be doing." And then he gave me a bunch of hunting knives. That was his way of being thankful, it was a great moment to share with my dad. He has always supported [my sister] Richelle and I in making work because he sees the value in sharing our experiences.

SC Where does your dad live?
BBH He lives in Fort St John, BC. He hunts a lot... I think that's the one thing he really knows. His father passed that knowledge down to him and he wants to pass it down to us. But the funny thing is he only has girls, I mean, that doesn't matter to him at all, he's going to teach us no matter what. All of our birthday gifts are long Johns and hunting gear. He's always been very stern with us, to make sure we can one day pass it on to the next generation—to provide for ourselves as well as for our communities. ☺



The first time I shot a gun, my dad made us drink so many cans of coke. Just so we could have something to shoot at.



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Marilyn Volkman Nov 19
NO TRUMP

I hate that I wake up re-inspired by art almost everyday. Sometimes I think it's a trap. But maybe that's just life.

It's kind of funny, and I'm just rambling here, but I think it's nice to have a name to put on it: that feeling of being inspired. It's stupidly simple, but sometimes I just think that being inspired by art is being inspired by people, or being hopeful about art as the potential for people to do meaningful things, to approach life in a meaningful way. It's this huge sensation of possibility with no particular goal and I wonder if my work with other jobs, real jobs, with uses and applications and stuff. I wonder if they feel that way about their professions very often. Or if it just happens in normal life, unexpectedly, like with love, or kids, or profound moments of realization.

I just imagine that religious people feel that way a lot, soldiers and activists definitely, other faith-duty related professions—jobs where your actions are guided by some ambiguous cause, vague determination, an unpredictable force of some kind, a struggle against the odds. Recently, I've been thinking a lot about joining the military, and I keep wondering why artists don't really do that kind of thing as art? Is it about not giving up freedom and participating in potentially in bad politics? Like, are artists really that averse to conflating research with bad systems? Because, honestly, they spend their time participating in capitalism and talking about atrocities against humanity. Maybe socially conscious art is more about having the time and resources to give voice to people who have already found themselves in subjugated situations. Like, how can I give voice to the subjugated, if I myself am also subjugated?

I think artists have this similarly strange mental state, a lot like religious people or soldiers, or anyone following something like that, but artists' dogma is this bizarre critical-meaningful-change-for-the-betterment-of-the-future kind of thing, but with a very sexy analytical platform. Like, the activists don't have that.

It is potentially very sexy and very meaningful and very real, and it historically draws people in. I think all this talk didn't get you that drat yet. The power steering in my truck went out and I've been working doubles all week.

Steven Cottingham Nov 19
NO TRUMP

Yeah, totally. Here is a series of things I wrote today in the notes folder of my phone while I waited for the bus:

1. Maybe the best way I can articulate things is this: I don't give a shit about art. I give a shit about people.
2. Artists are not entrepreneurs, evangelicals, or economists. But not are they social workers or saviours.
3. Art should not be about making a living. It should be about living.
4. Art cannot save the world. But it can change it.

I've been thinking a lot about art and faith. I've especially been thinking about how to reconcile my own religious upbringing: wondering if turning to art instead of God is just making use of that same energy within me, that same unconscious desire to believe in something else. Something greater, maybe. Abstracter, definitely. I really agree that soldiers, activists, and artists are probably all at the mercy of something indescribable, and all feel similar emotions about it. Like, the exact same chemicals are being triggered but for vaguely different reasons. But I don't think those are the only people... I wonder about those who devote themselves to capitalism or conservative ethos and the accumulation of wealth, whether or not this 'faith' is part of that striving. I wonder, especially when most money is digital, invisible, symbolic and constantly in flux. Do we have faith in capital?

Regarding art and religion, I think the biggest parallel for me is (aside from the proselytizing that evangelicals and administrators alike participate in, always searching for bigger audiences, more numbers) that feeling of finding someone who believes in something similar but not quite what you believe in, and the intensely jarring sensation that follows. Like, being raised as a non-denominational Christian, I always sort of felt like I had a kinship with those who practiced Catholicism, especially in circumstances surrounded by so many atheists or individuals of more disparate rituals, but the amount of seemingly-arbitrary rituals and extra rules present in Catholicism appeared to obscure the point of what I felt the Gospels were all about, and had more in common with later periods of history when religion was utilized as an oppressive political tool. And now, when I go to galleries and I find one that puts little red dots on the wall, willfully showing and selling work that fits into pre-existing economies and eagerly proliferates this consumerist approach, I feel something like sacrilege. I know I'm high-minded, but I want art to be a utopic space that proposes challenges to existing status quos, rather than reinforcing them. But it's all done in the name of art. Or Jesus. Or Democracy. Faith. Whatever. We unite under these umbrella terms and then the most intense fights occur between two people who think that word or concept does not belong to a foreign interpretation. It becomes personal, and it hurts to see this thing you love manipulated and abused by someone else.

I'm sorry to hear about your truck. That really sucks. How are you?

Marilyn Volkman Nov 19
NO TRUMP

I don't know if you feel this way, but I've always had this feeling that I'm training for something. Something really big, or just bigger than day-to-day life, and yeah, after religion didn't really fill that space for me, art became the opening for me to fill with that need for something else. What the something else is changes form, from religion to art, to what we define as being art the more we learn about it, but the feeling, and it does feel chemical, the feeling is really similar. I went to church with my Grandmother a couple weeks back and it really felt like seeing or organizing good art, or a good artist talk.

Connecting the ritual part in Catholicism to oppressive political tools makes sense. And it makes me think of rituals of art criticism and art education at the graduate level... What kinds of churches did you go to? I was raised non-denominational Christian also, and my mom's choice of religion always followed the needs of her life in different phases, so I went to Catholic schools before military or public ones, and we did a range of Protestant, Catholic, Universalist Unitarian, and even Gospel Churches. My mom was attracted to Catholicism for the exact reasons you're describing, but on the other hand she liked the arbitrary rules as more troubling and confusing points in her life because it gave her something controlling yet still romantic to help guide her morally when she wanted to go in other directions but didn't know how to. My Dad's Protestant ethics were always super strong, and his Lutheran upbringing gave her a fall back denomination, and a place to go when we moved somewhere new.

I wonder why there is not much more real, non-ironic energy put into art like that. There's room for it all, but some areas in art are really lacking. The ideal of acquiring money in art is taxing but exciting and troubling thing. The whole conceptual application process is such a shot in the dark, at least how I understand it at this point. It's always about people who help and believe in me, because they've seen me work (not just talk or write about it) and I often find that institutions, the ones who even want to support innovative projects are also difficult to deal with because they themselves feel like they are the ones pushing the status quo, they are the ones taking the risks as an institution in just doing what they're doing, so what they fund seems secondary in a way, not so important. I try to avoid doing this in my own projects, and it is hard to keep that straight when you start functioning more like an organizing body or entity with a greater cause. For me, the bigger goal of the project can feel paramount, and the art that results secondary; but you can't go into that way with participants giving their energies—and you choose who you work with for a reason. You see each person involved as their own project or institution pushing the status quo, even if they aren't there yet, with the potential for another even bigger and more important goal within the project—and that, I always try to remember, is why I love working with people who have big and small visions they believe in, and powerful ideas, however preliminary or abstract about what they can do, or what art can do. This is one reason why generosity is at the core of my practice—although I don't like that word much—but it's not about giving things away, or saving or even supporting other people's work, it's about transmitting and opening up a ridiculous level of generosity in a really abstract way that allows people to push themselves into new territories, push their own status quo in ways they wouldn't have had the opportunity to do otherwise at that moment, or in that unexpected place with people they don't already know. I think there should be, and is space for all voices under the heading of art, but we should, and really get to, choose which voices we focus on. That's the amazing things about curating/organizing. I want to intuitively grab the most challenging, captivating, and compelling voices and transmit their energies with everything I have access to. Art is such a great a place for changing and challenging things because it can be utterly abstract and bizarre without being different for the sake of providing something different. It's not different for the sake of being different, it has direction of some kind, without providing a particular service. Without that clarity of service, people often get easily discouraged, suspicious, or embarrassed about that idea of art being a tool for change—people shrug at the inability to do things with art, and blame their financial woes, but I think it's really important to remember that a lot of good art is a big, huge, financial black hole. You shouldn't financially ruin yourself over it, but I think you should be willing to change your relationship to money for it. And like you said earlier, if you can get larger numbers to participate, to be pulled in, people who can't stay away from those kinds of gravitational pulls toward big things, then hopefully you'll have people in that black hole with you, and it won't be so hard and lonely and broke and desperate in there. And people get pulled in for all kinds of reasons. That's the amazing thing—you can't predict that.

In all, I'm okay, I'm thinking a lot, and enjoying the return of the warm sun after a couple of cold weeks, and working a lot, and feeling good about having the money to buy a flight to Cuba, and continue working on my projects with friends there, so yes, some days are hard, but I'm doing alright. How are you? ☺

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After the war they told her that her husband was missing. Unsure of how to negotiate the presence of his disappearance, Rodica bought an empty cemetery plot, and invented a man that spent his time hiding inside graves. On weekends, she took the train to the cemetery and brought food to this man (cats ate the food, which in turn, kept the ritual on loop). Years later, her husband comes back to Bucharest after living abroad, but Rodica continues with her visits to this fake grave.

—Bogdan Cheta

Over the future, everybody deludes themselves. We can only be sure of the present moment. Yet is this true? Can we really know the present? Are we capable of judging it? How can somebody who doesn't know the future make any sense of the present? If we don't know towards which future the present leads us, how can we say that this present is good or bad, that it merits our support or our mistrust, or even our hatred?

—Milan Kundera, *L'ignorance*

December 10, 2014

I had to leave the house. With nowhere to go, I found myself walking. It was warm, and the snow melted to mud. As I walked hand in hand with the night, I noticed how most of the houses had their doors open—perhaps so they can breathe in this unusual, warm air. Walking along, and staring at the partially exposed interiors, I thought of myself that I would like to live in these houses, to be permeated by their intimacy, and to let all my revies, all my bitterness dissolve in that not-so-faraway interior atmosphere. As I slowed down in my pace, I imagined what it would be like to enter such and such room—treading through it familiarly and flopping down exhausted on an old couch, surrounded by its floral chintz pillows; to acquire another intimacy there, to breathe another air and myself to become another person entirely. Stretched out on the couch to contemplate this street where I was now walking, from inside the house, from behind the curtains (and I tried to imagine as precisely as possible the view of the street through the open door as seen from the couch), to suddenly be able to find in myself memories of experiences I never had, unknown memories of life, a life carried with me forever and ever, memories belonging to the intimacy of these indifferent surroundings that knew nothing of me.

And then, an inexpressible bitterness descended into my soul as when someone sees before him that there is absolutely nothing left to do, and nothing left to accomplish. I started to run through the streets in the dark, jumping over pools of melted snow and stepping into some up to my knees. I walked in all directions. As I made my way through the deserted back alleys, my feet sunk into the mud up to my ankles. Suddenly I bent down and put my hands in the mud. Why not? / Why not? (I felt like screaming). The mud batter was lukewarm and mild; my hands went through it easily. When I clenched my fist, the mud came out between my fingers in beautiful globs, black and shiny. But immediately all my sadness shrank back in the face of a calm and gentle thought. I knew now what I had to do: since it couldn't continue, the only real possibility for me was to put an end to it all. What was I leaving behind? A wet ugly world where snow felt mud behind, as its shadow. I wipe my face with my shirt and lick the tears from the corner of my mouth, savouring their salty taste. I sit down on the ground, and continue to enjoy feeling miserable. There, in the mud, and with the night beside me, I pull my MacBook out of the backpack, and begin to write—write as if my life depended on it.

There is no place like this near this place so this has to be the place an [in]visible summit for dreams, fears, and the everyday

When I was a child, they told me about a man who was seriously ill. He took refuge inside a large, but crumbling house, underneath a bridge, and beside a rail yard: not far from the office tower where my mother worked. Although it's undisturbed wilderness always seemed staged, his garden—to most unsuspecting outsiders, was overrun by a forest of unkempt rose bushes, lilacs, apple trees and the many—now giant weeds. If one was curious enough to press their ear against the weathered fence which guarded the inside of this private chaos—and listen to the sounds of it's still privacy, then an absent presence would eventually touch them with its inner thoughts (an attentive or predisposed or pious ear was required to perceive this). There, against the fence, and in its shadow, time was taken out of the present so that those who passed by became fleeting shadows, revenants, appearing and disappearing—as their footprints left and erased their own tracks, like

a shared ritual that could continue forever as a loop of its invisible reality. Some of these shadows then began to ask me what I was doing and I usually replied that I am trying to get to know this place, to internalize it. And, as I began to sink in the silence of these meetings, I imagined that a visitor, like myself, moisturized the potential for this garden's unnatural nature, and my mission then, became to find, record, and touch this stranger's words. Initially, I suspected that someone, different from the man that lived there, used the yard, and I convinced myself that this 'someone' could also share my desires—certainly, we shared a common strangeness. Day by day, I attached myself to the possibility of his presence, and as I continued to persist in my pilgrimage, tasked myself the inevitable question: if we did make contact, will he like me?

"Maybe this is someone that I can love," I thought. But I had no reference for love. And because the object of love can be anything, it revealed itself as a place I could travel to. When I was bullied, tossed around the school yard and yelled at, I learnt how to go there. In my mind, love made me want to be the one that was on the ground—the outsider. There, from the outside, you can recognize love, even if from the inside it appears to resemble hate.

At first, the plan was that after I would visit Maria, I would sneak inside this man's yard and wait for something/someone to appear. But nothing changed. Then one day, and to my surprise, the man, who's illness everyone warned me about, quietly walked towards me and without words, made eye contact (and at the same time extend his arm with a hand-picked flower bouquet). This gesture was repeated the following day, then the day after, and the day after the day after. Inside this new ritual, we became invisible together. But his state grew worse with each daily bouquet. And I started to go inside his house, when I didn't see him at the gate. The door was open.

Sitting in privacy like a cat

His name is Florin. In 1997, when we met, he must have been sixty years old. I don't know if he is still alive, but today, my father is also sixty years old. As I am writing this, hidden amongst the stacks of art books, shelved away on the fifth floor from the Taylor Family Digital Library, at the University of Calgary, I realize that I am thirty years old—and maybe today is a kind of half-distance to 1997.

Other than the books that I've touched over the years, I am surrounded by dozens of tuition and assignment-bound frustrated younger men; and their faces, like mine, are camouflaged by their MacBook labour. I've grown to like their company, and determination—and their forced silences.

Having returned to the same shelves for the past ten years, I'm beginning to feel how the staff has finally begun to suspect that I may not be a regular student—which is interesting because in their eyes, I think I'm on my way to becoming a local ghost of sorts: that strange and jobless man we've all seen behind a table, or in a dark corner at the library, always looking lost and in a state of dreaming. But, I don't just hide—I write, and this state (of being occupied and unoccupied, together, at once, centred and uncentred) is what I saw when I first met Florin, seventeen years ago. His figure was slender, with large—but mostly bruised hands. I remember those hands, because now I look at everyone's hands in the same way I did when I first noticed his. His eyes were blue, and his hair white; a clean

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white. He wore an old suit—that through use, became a uniform, or a place, in the same way that a library is my home. And sometimes, he had a fur hat. Or patched sweaters. And oversized socks.

He tucked the bottom of his pants inside his socks, which made him look like a folk character. I read about in stories from books that my grandmother brought from Bucharest. Rather than using words, he mostly spoke with his hands. Quietly. And then, I witnessed how this physical choreography grew to include objects, and scent, and colour.

I am inside Florin's house.

It is quiet.

The air is soft.

I make my way down the narrow hallway and then up the stairs, where I find myself in the middle of a large room.

On the floor there is an oversized kilim (traditional tapestry-woven carpet) and on it, there are rows of mismatched chairs, armchairs, benches, stools, couches, and beds.

I count them: 25 chairs, 15 armchairs, 2 benches, 7 stools, 1 couch, and 2 beds. 60 possible guests.

Thinking that perhaps this could be the site for an assembly of sorts. (Google Martin Kippenberger's 1994 *The Happy End of Franz Kafka's 'Amerika'*, which is also an unformed adaptation.) I sit myself down on one of the chairs. There, while facing the window, I decide to wait for the others.

But they're late.

The deep silence echoed by the empty furniture surrounds me. With her, I stand.

Legs crossed. Gaze lost. I go to sleep.

Eyes remain riveted on the moon that's rising from the edge of man's sorrow

And then I hear Florin's voice. I can't tell where it's coming from. I look everywhere, but there is no sign of him—only his voice, which now sounds tired and distorted; like a faded chant. A thick gold tube (it appears to be an organ pipe) descends through a hole in the ceiling. As the whispered chant arranges its acoustic path through the rows of chairs and beds, I notice how this gold tube amplifies his voice from somewhere upstairs. He tells me that he is too tired to come down, but that he wants to talk. I get up, and walk closer to the tube. My face is reflected on it's surface and as I touch it, and feel the vibration of his voice, I tell Florin that I miss him.



Don't worry, he says.

My double is downstairs, sitting in the chair across from you. Another young man is reading a book on the couch. And his friend is writing me a letter.

I stare at the couch, and the only things I can see are a pair of socks, unzipped black trousers, along with a stained wool sweater (to this day, I continue to invoke the presence of this missing 'body' by recreating variations of the arrangement in my own installations). Having decided not to run away, I ask Florin if my double is with him upstairs, and he answers yes. Florin also tells me of another chair, outside in the garden, close to the hole in the fence—the place where I often, and where others would sneak through: how from that chair, he was able to see me waiting as he was upstairs in his bed, hiding from death. Towards the end of my visit, he tells me that we are both waiting for the same thing, and that one day, that thing will come—unannounced.

Haunting the normal world

That was the last time I talked to Florin. Without warning, my family sold everything and made the trip to Canada the following month. Here, in Calgary, while learning how to map out my own, private geography for out of the way places and invisible

companions, I thought

often about that chair

in Florin's garden, and

how close it was to the

street. I imagined it's

solitude, as I stood

still, in the garden,

feeling the ants burrowing

through it and the

rain beating down on it,

listening to the animals

and people going past,

feeling both the wind

and the sting of the

cold. I thought that if

Florin was intimately

connected to this chair,

then I could also find

him here, in Calgary—

and when I did find

places where I could be

alone, I made sure to

leave an empty chair be-

hind for him. Although

invisible, I knew he was

there. Sometimes when

I returned, left behind

on these chairs, I would

find packs of smokes—

or unopened beer bottles, and I knew that their presence was connected to his absence.

Encouraged by the condition of this evidence, when I walked, or when I slept, in my dreams, I could take on another body, possess another language: I could fly through walls, or become a lake, fly over the lake and see myself as a landscape. At night, I was double, I was that chair, dwelling in its own thoughts on the other side of Florin's fence. Another being emerged, to which I was intimately connected. I grew up making these connections, ultimately creating an identical double that I could take by the hand and walk with. (To be continued.)

Notes on the books and events I spoke with

Eyes remain riveted—verse gleaned from a lecture by Arnold J Kemp at the Banff Centre, 2014.

The Production of Space—Henri Lefebvre, Blackwell Publishing. English translation by Donald Nicholson-Smith, 1991.

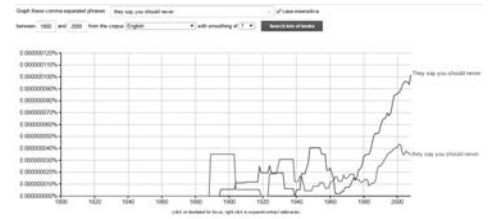
The Chairs (Faber Plays)—Eugene Ionesco, re-published by Faber & Faber, 1998.

Homosexual Desire—Guy Hocquenghem, published by Alison & Busby, UK, 1978.

Ongoing email correspondences with Sandra Vida.

For sporadic updates on the summit, please visit the online archive at bogdancheta.com/thereis-no-place. [D]

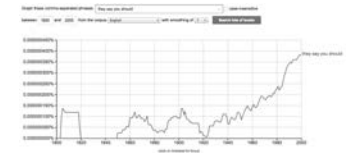




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Clockwise from top left: *You Are Here* by Sans façon (renders of proposed work). Two hundred red arrow-shaped balloons are filled with helium and given freely to Calgarians downtown. *Department of Lost Things* by Yvonne Mullock and Mia Rushton. Manifesting as a newspaper, their project catalogues items from public lost and found collections and seeks to unite individuals with their misplaced possessions. Realtime sentiment analysis by CONSULTANCY GROUP. *90 kmh Economy Drive* by Dick Averns. This is a multimedia project unfolding in several venues including billboards, lectures, and car bumper magnets. It is a tongue-in-cheek campaign advocating for more efficient consumption of fossil fuels. *Blackfoot* by Brittney Bear Hat. *#girlproblems* by Victoria Braun. Tweets from the eponymous hashtag are collected and combined into short poems. Victoria's work appeared in numerous street-level ad spaces, including digital displays at the Chinook LRT station.

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Dan Zimmerman wants to get rid of 'likes.' Currently, he's working on an app for mobile phones called LikeBlockr that does just that: it removes the like function from Instagram and prevents users from viewing or engaging with that kind of numerical data.

I called Dan over FaceTime to speak more about his project. We began our conversation talking about different forms of quantification and how the conventions of these measurements need to be questioned.

Dan Zimmerman: I've been thinking of different ways to disperse this app, looking to the methods that real programmers and developers use, and I think I have to make a Facebook page for LikeBlockr. Do you think that's a conflict? Having a Facebook page that's getting likes?

Steven Cottingham: I don't know. On one hand it's acknowledging the futility of the app itself because you have to like it to stay abreast. But it's also acknowledging that we're all sort of complicit in these quantitative behaviours and sometimes they're necessary, but I don't think that they're necessary to the extent that we rely on them. A friend shared an article today (I'll send you the link after) but it was basically about art and grant-writing in a neoliberal economy.

DZ: Okay.

SC: The focus was on how much pressure there is to deliver quantifiable stats to granting bodies and public funders.

DZ: Sure, yeah.

SC: When art, for example, enters more political, electoral conversations it becomes about stuff like, 'Look how much art we enable! Look how many artists!' But the author of the article was like, 'I don't need more art. I just want good art.'

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DZ: Yeah, exactly. SC Reading some of the comments was interesting. Some argued that you need lots of bad art to ensure the presence of good art. They said that the ratio of good to bad is always so heavily weighted toward the bad. You need all the bad art to find some goodness in there.

DZ: Yeah, that sounds relevant for sure. I was reading about app marketing strategies, and much of it is about validating your market. They talk a lot about how to get customers out, so one of the things I want to do is really reach out to those magazines and online blogs. I'm planning a newsletter.

SC: Yeah, I think that's great. Like I said in our emails, I think it's really important that you use all of the languages of apps and adopt those expected conventions. Because, for you, this is all part of the art project.

DZ: For sure. When I was interviewing programmers for the project, one team said, 'You need to consult Instagram, you have to ask their permission first before we're going to work with you.' And I was like, there's no way I'm doing that. But I think one of the best situations would be if Instagram had a problem with it. I mean, it itself is a free app, too.

SC: Yeah, that would be good. And you'd get even more media because of it. There have been a few projects for the Biennial where artists' projects have been held up because they wanted to do things properly and ask permission. So, I've really had to reiterate that I have no interest in asking permission. We can work together to write apologies later, if necessary, but I think it's important to show to the city, to the public, to your peers, whoever, that you just care so much that you're willing to do things yourself unaffirmed by any greater entity. It's like citizens working to take control of their own public spaces.

DZ: Yeah, definitely. And I think there were so many parallels between that and the currency of likes. I've been reading a bit about it how it's completely unregulated but it's still a currency.

SC: Right.

DZ: It's the wild west out there. I mean, you have people stationed in India operating click farms where people are buying tons of likes. I think YouTube just cracked down on a couple music labels for buying view counts by the millions. It's an advertising campaign for sure. I know a lot of people who don't treat it like that necessarily, but they still treat it like money in a way. I have a few friends that are 'Instagram famous.'

SC: Yeah?

DZ: Like, one friend went on a date with this girl and another friend was asking, 'Oh, how many followers does she have?' And he was like, 'Oh, 15k.' Is that the criteria to date now? It's like they're in this elite class that is so

quantifiable. And when you hit ten thousand Instagram followers you get a little 'K' beside your number. It's a sign of prestige. An award. That's definitely something I want to resist against because it's not necessarily based in worthwhile content. When people proliferate this culture of celebrity in this way... I don't know what it is but it's upsetting. Maybe because I only have like three hundred followers or something.

SC: Wow. Three hundred still seems like a lot to me.

DZ: I don't know if there's ever been anything that's been this explicit before. Like, you have always been able to judge someone by their car or clothes but this is so basic, numeric. I think it's really vulnerable to quick value judgments and doesn't necessitate any proof other than likes. Do you know what I mean?

SC: Right. I think it really effectively embodies, or demonstrates, democracy. Everything good and everything that I think is problematic with democracy.

DZ: Sure. **SC:** They're just numbers with no regard to experience or expertise or care or how much time someone has spent studying, um, electoral platforms for instance. Consider a poli-sci major versus someone who voted because the candidate's name was pleasant-looking on the ballot. And quantitative data can still be manipulated to the extent that it becomes a qualitative marker, depending on its source. I spoke to someone who worked briefly in PR for a big oil company, and they receive so many studies saying over and over that they're destroying the Earth and then maybe one study that isn't so sure and so the firm will capitalize on that one study and bend it to say whatever they need to say.

DZ: Yeah, totally, it's kind of even colder. **SC:** Yeah. But then on the plus side it demonstrates, through numbers, that this is something that's widely appreciated and affects a lot of people and is therefore important. And because likes don't need expertise or certain access, it creates a very open environment and can be a great grassroots tool to rise up against something that previously claimed to speak for a significant population or whatever. Like taking power back.

DZ: Yeah, definitely. It's interesting. Like, slacktivism is fascinating because you have a lot of slacktivist practices like email petitions and Facebook groups but then there's certain ones like that group Avaz. I don't know if you've heard of them, but their email list is so large that they actually have effected some pretty tangible change. Because you do need that kind of influence: you do need an electorate or a voting base before people take you seriously.

SC: Right. **DZ:** But I think that's dangerous too because maybe it dwarfs those individuals who aren't able to accrue that level of merit-based judgment. Like, if you're not able to get ten thousand followers you don't really have a voice in what good photography is, you know?

SC: Yeah, and meritocracies are strange also, like, someone I respect on Twitter pointed out that a joke Twitter account (that was created that same day) already had fifteen thousand followers for only twenty tweets, and all the tweets/jokes were basically the same thing over and over and it wasn't even that great to begin with. And, looking at what's trending on Facebook, on that sidebar, is constantly depressing. It's mostly about sports teams or celebrities and rarely about, you know, international conflicts or social issues. It's depressing that this is what's important, what people are paying attention to. But, obviously, if my beliefs aren't trending then who am I to say what's important or worth paying attention to?

DZ: Yeah, exactly. And from the beginning I've said this isn't about shutting down Instagram or getting rid of likes as a currency. But more about playing devil's advocate. Some people might be like, why don't you create a dislike button for Instagram? But I don't think that's the same thing.

SC: No, that's still playing into the same game of quantifying. **DZ:** Yeah. Exactly. So, I think I'm interested in having a place where people can kind of have a respite from, I don't know, tangible points of envy or whatever. I could see Like-Blockr becoming something that people don't actually use but say they use. Does that make sense?

SC: Yeah. The whole thing is a conceptual art piece. Whether or not it's utilized, whether or not people install it forever or just to check it out, the idea of it provides a lot to think about and acts as a catalyst for more conversations like the one we've been having.

DZ: Yeah, actually I should be able to track those stats.

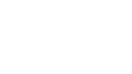
SC: I really like the idea of being able to play devil's advocate. Do you know where likes began? Is it Facebook?

DZ: Yeah, I think so. **SC:** And then Tumblr, Twitter, Instagram all have equivalents. **DZ:** Yeah, it's like a zeitgeist where everything happened all at the same time.

SC: Maybe stemming back to 'Hot or Not' type websites.

DZ: Or view counts, like traffic counters on Geocities sites. **SC:** I think likes are a relatively new trope, and it's important for us to question things as soon as they become taken for granted. Your project, I think, illustrates this.

DZ: I think it says, 'Likes are useful but be wary of the kind of thinking this encourages.' [0



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Another piece of reassuring plastic

Poetry must move past the tired declarations of humanist emotion into a form more indicative of how readers actually process language: [Fundamentally, it is the realization that the usages of language in poetry of the traditional type are not keeping pace with live processes of language and rapid methods of communication at work in the contemporary world. In Concrete poetry, we see [a] move toward formal simplification, abbreviated statement on all levels of communication from the headline, the advertising slogan, to the scientific formula—the quick, concentrated visual message, in other words. It is precisely this distancing from traditional poetics that makes Concrete poetry both a marginalized form unrecognizable to many poets and a genre perfectly suited to a 21st Century readership. Kenneth Goldsmith, founder and curator of UbUWeb, argues that for Concrete poetry readability was the key: like a logo, a poem should be instantly recognizable as poets strove to render all language into poetic icons, similar to the way that everyone can understand the meaning of a folder icon on the computer screen. For Goldsmith, Concrete poetry presaged the language and formulation of the graphic interfaces of the contemporary internet and the shift from command line to graphic icon. In her introduction to concrete poetry: A World View, Mary Ellen Solt declares that approaching the Concrete poem with the expectations one has for a traditional poem is a fallacy for [the Concrete poet is concerned with making an object to be perceived rather than read and the content of the Concrete poem is non-literary. It is precisely this non-literary content that makes the Concrete poem a form ideal for a 21st-century audience. The poem is the result of a concentration upon the physical material upon which the poem or text is made. Remember that [a]ctions and ideas are not the physical materials of poetry, and embrace a notion of literature not as craftsmanship but [L] as an industrial process where the poem is a prototype rather than the typical handwork of artistic artistry. Max Bense argues that Concrete poetry serves less an understanding of meaning than an understanding of arrangements. In Bense's estimation, Concrete poetry is less about semantic content than the arrangement of letters and material where headlines, slogans, groups of sounds and letters give rise to forms which could be models for a new poetry just waiting to be taken up for meaningful use. As Mary Ellen Solt argues, if the visual poem is a new product in a world flooded with new products, then it must partake of the nature of the world that created it. If poetry is going to reclaim even a shred of relevancy for a contemporary audience then poets must become competitive for readership. While graphic design, advertising and contemporary design culture expand to redefine and rewrite how we understand communication, poetry has become ruefully ensconced in the tradition: the McDonald's golden arches, the Nike swoosh and the Apple logo best represent the aims of contemporary poets. Beat poet Lew Welch supposedly wrote the North American insect repellent Raid's ubiquitous advertising slogan **Raid kills bugs dead** as a copywriter at Foote, Cone, and Belding in 1966—and thus applied imagist doctrine to the world of advertising. Conceptual poet Vanessa Place argues that [today we are of an age that understands corporations are people too and poetry is the stuff of placards or vice versa. In *Pilot Plan for Concrete Poetry* the Noigandres Group argue that Concrete poetry appeals to nonverbal communication where each poem is an object in and of itself, not an interpreter of exterior objects and/or [L] subjective feelings. These nonverbal objects are in fact closer to poetic logos than poetic texts and eschew readability in favour of being instantly recognizable. To crib Joyce Kilmer's overwrought and cliché-driven poem 'Trees' (the one saving grace of which is, in my opinion, that it is denigrated by Lex Luther in 1980's *Superman II*: I think that I shall never see / A poem lovely as a corporate logo. Like logos for the corporate sponsors of Jorge Luis Borges's Library of Babel, these poems use the particles of language to represent and promote goods and corporations just out of reach. These imaginary businesses, and the advertising campaigns that support them, promote a poetic dreamscape of alphabetic strangeness. As these imagined businesses are metaphorical, each logo can become creative work which is fully autonomous, self-sufficient, able to exist—not as an interpretation of other objects, and not as a mimetic representation—but as a creation in the fullest sense—original, independent of reference or imitation, meaningful in its own right. Concrete poetry engages with dead media in order to trouble the formation of meaning and import: to allow for the eruption of inalterable declarations of semantic nothingness. Concrete recuperates residual media, they are fully nostalgic for an ethereal, ephemeral moment. In our dreams, the resolution of the onerous landscapes are only so clear—much of what our mind establishes as the backdrop for our antics is only as clear required. These poems are the streetsigns, the signage, the advertising logos for the shops and corporations which are just beyond reach. Viewers need not read, they only need momentarily stare. It only requires consumption. This work should simply wash over us in the same way as any other billboard, logo or corporate slogan. Comfortable and unnoticed; another piece of reassuring plastic.

by Derek Beaulieu

Gone in sixty minutes: a conversation with Dick Avers

Stevens Cottingham Previously, you created a neon sculpture that declared 'The terms of art are endless.' What are the terms of your 90km/h project?

Dick Avers The significance of the 90km/h Economy Drive is about 'coming to terms.' Not everything is endless: fossil fuels are finite and road transportation produces around 20% of Canada's carbon gases, so driving slower is a smart way to cut pollution and conserve reserves. But how can you or we come to terms with this?

Choosing public transit, biking, or walking, are all energy efficient transportation methods. But if you do need to drive, at what speed can you achieve the best mileage? 90km/h is the average optimum speed for maximizing fuel efficiency. Henceforth driving on the highway at 90km/h reduces pollution, saves gas and contributes to a greener future. Affixing the green 90 maple leaf decal to your vehicle is a creative, personal commitment to saving energy by driving slower. You also let other drivers know you are reducing emissions while saving money. So this project is not just an umbrella and framework for a new slow driving movement; it is a way of building community.

I'm excited to exhibit the project on billboards. There's a positioning of artful language in an illuminated digital format that actually runs in opposition to the means and ends for which this format is normally used. It's a counter-narrative that makes a counter-monument out of conventional billboard use.

Cars aren't about to go away anytime soon, but if you do drive you can drive more consciously. And if you don't drive you can still be proactive in driving for a hard bargain with those that do, including politicians. So ultimately the terms for the 90km/h Economy Drive are about driving for a greener future.

SC What is the price of efficiency? How do we measure personal time against ecological preservation?

DA The 90km/h Economy Drive is all about reducing automobile gas consumption and pollution via a voluntary reduction in driving speed, especially on highways. So it's a voluntary price. Notably, although car engines are legislated to be more efficient today, this has not reduced overall gasoline consumption. Each 5mp/h you drive over 60mp/h can reduce your fuel economy by 7-8%. Driving on the highway at 90km/h instead of 110 or 120 km/h, reduces fuel costs and pollution by 20-30%.

These facts provide a quantitative price for efficiency, but I agree they don't necessarily account for time, particularly if you primarily value time as money. This suggests that other values need to be considered. Legislation is one, but Canada is not a global leader in environmental legislation, and Alberta in particular has repeatedly delayed tabling legislation to address pollution and meeting international standards. Thus one price, or rather cost, is either paying for government and bureaucratic deliberation, or, some would say, simply a waste of time.

Your questions somewhat conflate the present and future, i.e. efficiency (associated more with the now) linked to the notion of a price for ecological preservation (that is often projected as a future concern). If you consider existing job cuts, loss of services, and tax increases at the municipal level, it's clear we're already paying a hefty price. These factors amount to collective personal time that, if paid forward, will not only result in compromised ecological preservation, but also a compromising of education, health, and much more. So it's really only common sense to take a little more time when driving to reap benefits now, and in the future.

SC Can you elaborate upon the term 'design activism' and its application to this artwork?

DA This relatively new theory aims to activate audiences or consumers: to actively address whether the design of products or services is contributing to cycles of endless consumption. I learned about this via Alistair Fuad-Luke and his 2009 book *Design activism: beautiful strangeness for a sustainable world*. Fuad-Luke describes design activism as 'design thinking, imagination, and practice applied knowingly or unknowingly to create a counter-narrative aimed at generating and balancing positive social, institutional, environmental, and/or economic change.'

Activism need not be confined to connotations of radicalization. What we're looking is greater proactivity with certain actions to support a sustainable world. Acting is not just a dramatic profession for film or stage. As Shakespeare said, 'all the world's a stage.' It's just that today we're more than merely players: greater action is required toward the Bard's fifth stage, one of judgment, or today, social justice.

The 90km/h Economy Drive is a form of 'design thinking, imagination, and practice' that provides a counter-narrative to the negative aspects of internal combustion engine road travel. Design activism in the realm of the everyday is not that difficult to achieve. [L]

For more information, please visit: 90km.com/

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wednesday lypciv

to me, Anthea Black, Nicole Burtisch

Hello Steven!

It is with great joy that we present you with our contribution to the Calgary Biennial 2014-15, ahead of schedule!

Please see the attached pdf letter. The image of this letter, and the text within, are the sum of our public participation for this project. As we explain in the letter, there is no longer a need for us to flail around on your social media or take over your cellphone to realize our vision. THIS IS IT. If you wish, you may release our letter as an image on your website (recommended), or as text installments on Twitter, Facebook, etc. as the exhibition unfolds.

We will use our artist fee to recoup the costs of our letter writing bonanza, as well as produce the *LIDS Refusal Reader (LRR)*. The *LRR* is a compilation of texts, links, and assorted resources expounding on our latest strategy, including a text by Chicago-based cultural worker and curator Shannon Stratton: 'In Defence of Casualness.' Please send us your mailing address, and we will forward you a copy.

As we discussed, the agreed-upon artist fee of \$500 may be sent in full to Wednesday Lypciv, our Western Canadian Treasurer. She will then divide the fee amongst LIDS' membership according to our preferred arrangements.

Kindly remit our cheque to:

Wednesday Lypciv
Treasurer, Ladies Invitational Deadbeat Society
Calgary, Alberta

(FYI, hunky k.d. lang stamps are currently available at Canada Post.)

Yours Sincerely in hellraiser in the most relaxed way possible,

The Ladies Invitational Deadbeat Society

PS: Here are some materials you may wish to link to on the Biennial media, or consider on your own as the project unfolds:

The *LIDS Refusal Reader*, our forthcoming printed resource that we'll use our artist fee to produce. The publication launch might even have something to do with the Calgary Biennial timeline and/or concurrently appear at Art Metropole.

Heather Anderson's essay 'Renaming In/From Art Institutions' in the next edition of *FLUX* magazine, no. 50 'The Retreat', launching on November 26th.

Lesbians on Ecstasy <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GHd5SwbVCU>

Bojana Kunst's article, 'Art and Labour: On consumption, laziness and less work,' *Performance Research* Issue 17-6. P. 116-125. 2012.

Both LIDS and cheyanne turions' contributions to *Syphon* magazine (Issue 2.2, 2013) and *FLUX* Magazine (Issue 37-1, Winter 2013-14).

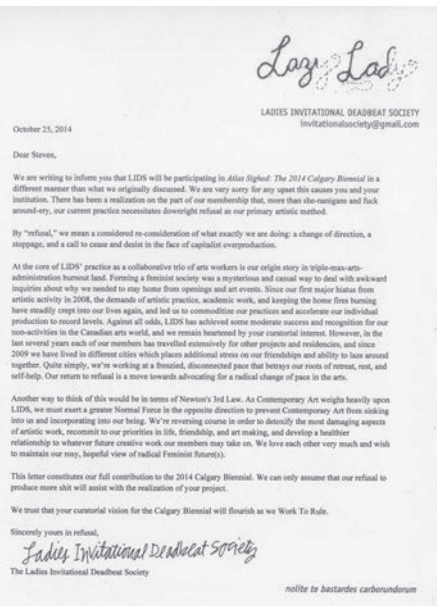
Power Ekroth, 'Notes from the superstructure,' *Sex Impossible Things Before Breakfast* (MOMENTUM 7, eds. Power Ekroth and Erlend Hammer, Moss: Aduard, 2013. 4-12).

Lee Lozano's Dropout Piece, 1970.

The video 'Girls Just Wanna Have Fun' by Cathy Busby & Melodie Calver, Canada 1987. 11 minutes. Required viewing from our super feminist mentors. [L]



Nov 5



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Art leading up to the apocalypse

I met Carly through a mutual friend. Three years out of a BFA at Concordia, she had recently moved to Toronto to study social work at the University of Toronto. Over pitchers of beer in Chinatown, she told me about her program, her life, and all the feelings in between. Carly had recently broken up with her boyfriend of six years. To me, it was the most common Montréal love story. For her, it was the end of the world: Boy meets girl, boy plays in a band, girl goes to art school, they think it's forever, they graduate, slowly realize that, oh shit, we're no longer twenty-two, we're still living exactly like we did back then, we're outsiders, and we can't speak French. They slowly grow a part, one going back to school, and another trying out another city. Carly was devastated that night. The life she had built for herself was coming to an end, and she was not ready to start anew.

Do you make a living off your artwork? Do you present your work without compensation? Do find yourself often thinking, "This is just temporary?"

In 2010, Rihanna declared that she'd found love in a hopeless place. Well, actually Calvin Harris was the one that probably found the love and wrote about it: I mean, he was the sole songwriter, and her stylist was smart enough to get her to wear bleached denim and act like a shitty kid to make us all like, like, yeah, this shit's real. We all feel this. I see my friends struggle with all sorts of different substances. Who am I kidding, I wake up everyday with a mild hangover. The point is we were lied to. None of it's real. Especially not Rihanna.

Have you ever held fundraisers/parties/social gatherings at venues and bars around town where you get your friends to make free art to make the space "more artsy" and get your friend's band that just started to play three songs? How much did you make that night? How many friends did you lose that night? How many "connections" did you make that night? How many hours went into organizing your event? Was there any purpose to your event? Did you feel more hopeful or hopeless at the end of the night?

I was infatuated with this guy for the past little while. At first I thought he was great. He was the embodiment of all the things I find myself desiring: broad shoulders, always smiling, kinda shitty, has potential but isn't doing much about it. I always just pick them exactly like that. An artist, so much potential, needs help: let me save you I want to save people from themselves, and then I end up drowning in them. It all comes crashing down because I'm not twenty-two anymore. I get frustrated. I feel like a piece of shit when I see him flirting with other boys. I'm a lot more broke because I'm always paying for his beers too. It's not that I'm mad at him, I'm just mostly disappointed in myself. Sometimes, I think that I think I have built-in blinders around my eyes to avoid what reality is actually like.

In a post-apocalyptic world will art serve any purpose? Will anything produced by artists have value?

Carly had come to the conclusion that, yeah, maybe she needs to go back to school after she fully gave up on the art thing. She told me about her course load. She mentioned an exercise from a recent class that involves imagining a hypothetical, post-apocalyptic world. The exercise provides scenarios in which you decide the fate of others—do you save the uneducated working mother of three or the doctor with white supremacist leanings? Who is valuable at the end of the world?

What is the relationship you have to your walls? What color are your walls? How often do you rotate the objects hung on your walls?

The average promotional campaign for a Korean pop star prior to their album release lasts about two months. Two weeks before an album is released, a slew of music videos are released.

Then the album comes out, the band does promotion for about a month, it hits the charts for a month, and then everyone moves on to the next project. Are we really in a recession? Or are we just looking at this all backwards?

Do you find yourself thinking of small manageable ideas for art projects? Do you follow trendy art blogs? Do you think you will apply for your MFA to become more "legitimate"?

I've been really lucky to come from a family that doesn't really put up with my bullshit. My mother is an avid supporter of tough love. She has always told me not to blame my shortcomings on other people. What happens to me is solely my own doing.

The system is broken! You have to learn to break the system!

As an artist, I've always carried the guilt of making. That I'm contributing to this landfill of waste by using resources to create utterly useless objects that, at this point in my career, will be garbage in ten years. As a curator, I have realized that, in this economy, we cannot afford to continue in the traditional way. That is perhaps the most pointless act in existence to display five objects in a white cube that will then be seen by all of few hundred people. The gallery becomes a very clean dumpster. As an art administrator, I struggle to pay bills. Everyday I worry about the health of my organization and think, realistically, how much longer do we actually have? I say the words "sustainable" or "austerity" out loud in conversation several times a day.

Does your art manifest as objects? Do you feel part of a community?

Since graduating college, I have done everything in my power to create and foster an arts community. I believe it is our only chance for our survival. For art's survival. But I'm tired of one-night-only events that only your friends show up to, I'm sick of exhibiting for week-long festivals. I'm tired of desperately building my CV, I'm tired of no artist fees, I'm tired of dumbing down because it's more of "spectacle" than an exhibition. We treat our emerging artists like garbage and we have learned to be treated like garbage.

Are you an artist? Are you an installation artist? Have you made an installation that is on view for less time than you spent installing it? Does your work think about the future?

In an apocalyptic world art may not serve any purpose, but it is not the apocalypse yet. I think it's time for change. It's time to let go of the past, of constraints that hold us back, of the white walls, and re-think the purpose of art. We have to learn to think bigger, to make work that reflects, not imitates. We have to treat ourselves right be treated right. We have to exchange our varying skills with one another, to make for better well-rounded practices.

Are we here? Is this it? Should we start preparing?

After beers that evening, Carly had gotten so drunk that she downloaded one of those "what will your baby look like" apps, where pictures of you and your partner are combined to imagine an offspring. She made several different versions of their babies, and faxed her ex the images as well as the names she'd given them.

© Mohammad Rezaei



Above: Things are going to get worse before they get even worse, an anonymous artist appropriated official City of Calgary stationery to disperse notices on telephone poles and hoarding walls around the city. I do not fear what remains forgotten, another artist tied strings to the fingers of local statues. Shown here are Emily T Murphy of the Women Are Persons monument and Sitting Eagle.

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THE CALGARY BULLETIN

March 2015

THE CITY OF CALGARY, OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

The City of Calgary is proud to announce that, in 2015, it will sell all of its Minimalist blob sculpture to Red Deer and will use the money to invest in the tuition of students involved in the arts and other non-capitalistic disciplines.

THE GLENBOW MUSEUM, OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

The Glenbow Museum is proud to announce that, in 2015, it will turn its entire top floor into a residency for emerging Calgary artists, in an effort to actually invest in the development of our local contemporary creative community rather than constantly trying to make us proud of our racist, colonial history.

CONTEMPORARY CALGARY, ALSO AN OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

Contemporary Calgary is proud to announce also that, in addition to its two flourishing locations, ten more will be added to the organization in the new year, forming the first-ever corporatized 'chain gallery.' Hoping to emulate Burger King and Concorde Group, CC plans to trailblaze the 'to-go' art scene, monopolizing and reimagining old Jugo Juice locations.

CALGARY HERALD MISPRINT

On Tuesday, February 2nd, The Calgary Herald was mistakenly printed as The Calvary Herald. There was a new guy working the printing station and he hit the wrong button, resulting in 550 000 misprints. No religious statement was intended, we don't believe this is 'the place of the skull,' and we apologize for any public discomfort unintentionally caused.

NEW PUBLIC ARTWORK REVEALED

The City of Calgary and Calgary Arts Development proudly unveil a collaboratively-commissioned new public artwork: Petition. This public sculpture consists of a series of seemingly-unending surveys asking "average Calgarians" (no artists, please) if they think this work is acceptable and if we even need art anyway.

CALGARY ADVOCATE FOR THE ARTS ANNOUNCEMENT

The Calgary Advocate for the Arts is proud to announce its adoption of the beautiful historic BMO Building on Stephen Avenue, downtown Calgary. Rather than its vaulted ceilings, chandeliers, and marble floors being coated with the sweat of upper-class GoodLife Fitness members, the building will be restored to its original condition and filled with new thought. A venue for exploratory art, dance, music, and public readings. The Advocate will unveil the building's new name and open its doors March 1, 2015. The opening show will be two cellists facing each other across the enormity of the space, playing to each other. All entrance to the facility will be FREE, as the space is a celebration of our city's shared history and continued creative progress. It is a space we can call our own.

'BEST OF CALGARY' RESULTS ARE IN

FFWD Weekly's annual Best of Calgary poll allows citizens to vote for their favourite local businesses, trends, and cultural zeitgeists. For the third time in a row, Calgarians have voted the House of Persian Rugs on 10 Ave SW as the best gallery space in the whole city. This year's runners-up are the DaDe ART + DESIGN LAB and the Art Gallery of Calgary, even though the latter doesn't even exist anymore. The people have spoken!

ANNOUNCEMENT FOR CALGARY'S FIRST INTELLECTUAL FESTIVAL

For the first time, Calgary is proud to announce its first-ever Intellectual Festival, occurring between February 1st and March 2, 2015. Join us in forming passionate opinions about things we have never experienced, and then keeping them to ourselves.

ANNOUNCEMENT FOR BRIDGELAND BIENNIAL

Bridgeland, in collaboration with the Wheelchair & Yoga Balls Store on 1 Ave and Edmonton Trail, is pleased to announce its first-ever Biennial, a survey-exhibit of its most exciting experimental emerging community members. The Bridgeland Biennial will utilize the Wheelchair & Yoga Balls space from January 1 to February 1, 2016, and will remain open to the public from 12:00 to 8:00 PM daily.

AN ANNOUNCEMENT ABOUT ANOTHER FESTIVAL

For the first time, Calgary is proud to announce its first-ever Art Festival, occurring on February 3, 2015. Join us all day for an exciting two-part workshop: Part One, 1:00 AM to 4:00 PM: Pursuing a line of work that won't pay you well but allows you to follow your dreams. Part Two, 4:00 to 1:00 PM: Letting it exhaust you until there is nothing left.

CALL FOR DONATIONS

Our gallery is seeking donations from artists for our upcoming fundraiser. We will be auctioning off your work to support our programming. You know we are committed to supporting artists. Therefore we will be selling your work to members of our community, which is comprised entirely of other artists. Lots of people will see your work, and you can even list this as an official exhibition on your CV. Unfortunately we can't pay you, but maybe you'll see someone else's donated work you'd like to purchase? Thanks for your support!

ANNOUNCEMENT FROM GEORGE DINBUCK, CALGARY CONSTRUCTION PRESIDENT

Calgary's cultural cornerstone, the +15 hallway system, was destroyed last Monday.

Structural micro-fissures, caused by lattice yield stress due to previously undetectable building movement resulting from mantle convection and tectonic asthenospheric doming, made the hallways unsafe for continued use. As a result, the foot traffic in the city has increased substantially and the unprofessional and professional worlds have collided. Please be safe and don't text while you walk.

EDITORIAL: QUESTIONS I HAVE DONE NOTHING ABOUT

An enormous condo building was just built down the road from me. It has a beige brick façade and towers above a small, long-standing seniors' flat. The condo building now blocks their view of the sunset. Did they ask the seniors living there if they didn't want to see the sunset anymore? Do you fail to see the beauty of a sunset after the age of 60?

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

We cordially invite you to start your own goddamn gallery. Stop asking permission to be an artist. Make something bigger than yourself.

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(Cont'd from page one) ...provincial government nearly passed a bill suppressing the agency of already-marginalized youths. Our prime minister, who personally represents my parents' riding, is Americaphilic to a devastating degree. Social justice, equality, and communal awareness—the things advocated anciently by Socrates and the prophet Muhammad—still seem so goddamn unpopular. Things seem worse and I feel powerless to change them.

In addition to all of the artists and writers involved in this project, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to the following individuals for their encouragement, assistance, and inspiration: Kyle Beal, Matthew Mark Bourree, Lindsay Fischer, Samantha Haslam, GraceMarie Keaton, Christina Mayder, Randy Niessen, Jeremy Pavka, Lucas Roberts, and Nicole Kelly Westman. Everything I do is for Janna, Julia, Kristofer, Mom, and Dad.

This iteration of the Biennial began slowly and hesitantly. I started something in 2012 and had since lost all desire to complete it. Still, before completely precluding the possibility, I wrote the logistics-heavy grant application, dispersed the obligatory call for submissions, and duly created a Facebook page—eventually finding something like hope with a new cohort of artists. Artists who equalize public space, artists who imagine life outside of capitalism, artists who acknowledge and fight against complicity in patriarchal conventions, and, more than anything, artists who question the staid seclusion of art institutions who selfishly hoard and catalogue these utopic dreams.

Let me be clear: I have no idea what I'm doing. But I want to do what I can to encourage those who are already actively and tirelessly pursuing the realization of a better democracy. Let me do something to validate the space I take up in the world, let me bear the administrative burden, let me be ensnared in a web of red tape if it means the strength of others might proliferate undiluted. Right now, the hope that something might happen is the only thing keeping me alive. I've said this before and I'll say it again now: Art cannot save the world. But it can change it. 🐾