

SNAPLine

FALL 2015

Newsletter artist:

SUSANNA BARLOW

**ART &
ACTIVISM**

CONTRIBUTIONS BY:

Mike Hudema, Sydney Lancaster, AJA Loudon, Dawn
Marie Marchand, Ana Ruiz, Zach Polis, and Katie Tasa

UPCOMING:

Workshops at SNAP Printshop
Drink & Draw - October 3rd



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PRINT-ARTISTS**

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SNAP loves all the volunteers, members, supporters and funders that make our organization not just possible but also a thriving art community. A special thanks to our funders & supporters.



Message from the Board

On behalf of SNAP's Board of Directors I'd like to thank you for all of your help in making a full and rewarding summer of programming at SNAP. From our annual Block Out party to various inspiring and outstanding exhibits in our galleries; from hands-on workshops in our studios and at various community outreach events, to the Members print exchange; the past few months have contributed to another busy and exciting year for SNAP! As fall approaches SNAP will be just as full of activity, with new studio courses and gallery exhibitions, our Annual General Meeting, and of course, Print Affair!

Please join me in a very warm welcome to SNAP's newest staff member, Printshop and Programs Coordinator, Amanda McKenzie. Amanda brings a wealth of experience and energy to her new position. I'd also like to thank our outgoing Printshop Coordinator Mackenzy Albright for wonderful support during his tenure: we wish you the very best in your future endeavors Mack!

SNAP's Board of Directors and Executive Director recently completed participation in the "New Pathways for the Arts: Advancing Innovation and Adaptive Change in the Arts". This series of workshops and forums was incredibly valuable for SNAP. As a Board we have a much better understanding of the challenges and capacities of our organization; ways to respond adaptively to complex challenges; and ideas for innovation and collaboration.

Using some of the awareness stemming from these workshops the Board of Directors has been continuing to prioritize plans for both short- and long-term work that can be done within our organization, through our strategic planning. We think there are many exciting possibilities on the horizon! We look forward to sharing with you our completed 5-year plan in the near future.

We hope that those of you who are able will join us at SNAP's Annual General Meeting, which will be held in late November, 2015 (more details will follow). After our AGM I look forward to seeing many of you at one of the most beautiful parties of the year, our annual Print Affair!

With warmest regards, .

Sincerely,
– Lisa Matthias, President



Executive Director's Message

Welcome to the fall edition of SNAPline, the Art & Activism edition. The publications committee is very excited about the content of this edition, as am I. As we continue to develop our publication around a theme we seem to be able to reach broader circles of writers and bring you new & diverse voices. On page 5 Dawn Marie Marchand generously illuminates her experiences of making art that reaches audiences outside of public galleries and why this is an important & meaningful pursuit. On pages 6&7 Ana Ruiz recounts a significant political performance in Cuba which depending on your perspective recently did or did not occur. In our centre spread, a vibrant collection of images captured by SNAP's summer student intern Katie Tasa of one of Edmonton's inner city Free Walls. On page 14 you can read about one of Edmonton's newest art collectives, Brown, Black & Fierce, their focus is a vital one and I hope you'll help support them in their work with your dollars and your time.

Fall is always an abrupt and major time of change at SNAP when we transition from summer fun to focused and action packed programming throughout the fall. In the first week of September we close out our experimental and collaborative collage exhibition: *Klusterfak* (September 04). We also begin our regular roster of fall printmaking courses and workshops in the printshop, many of which are already full or quickly filling. We are also planning the edition of a few specialized workshops throughout fall and winter - so stay tuned. On September 25th we celebrate the exhibition opening and book launch of *A Revision of Forward*. This exhibition of new prints by Walter Jule accompanies the launch of a book of poems by Wendy McGrath from Newest Press.

This fall we are also seeing big changes in our printshop. SNAP welcomes the addition of our new full time Printshop & Programs Coordinator, Amanda McKenzie. Several new pieces of equipment have started to arrive as we develop our Digital lab. These purchases have been funded by The Edmonton Community Foundation and so far we've seen the arrival of our 44" Epson printer and large Flat Bed Epson Scanner, many more additions still to come. We'll be busy and focused on setting up and developing protocols so our artists and students can get working on these new integral additions to our printshop.

Lastly fall would not be complete without our regular recurring community event, Drink & Draw! We hope you'll join us in the printshop on October 3rd for this eye-spy edition of our very best live drawing event. Enjoy those beautiful last days of summer, stay warm, I look forward to seeing you at SNAP very soon!

– April Dean,
Executive Director

ON THE COVER: Susanna Barlow, detail from *Stream Traces* 2014 | 20:00 | site specific performance.

This is a still image of a live performance during my Artist Residency at Museum Klöster Bentlage. This stream divides a forest and hay field and leads into the Ems River. I saturated my hair in pure gold pigment and lay in the stream until the water had washed it away. The shimmering gold line traces the water flow patterns which carry run off from both the farmers field and forested lands. The project emerged out of the desire to give voice to non-human matter by illuminating it's pathway in order to reveal it's inherent vitality. The position of the figure is also important. The body passively lays in the stream, allowing the water to wash away the pigment and determine the subsequent composition of the golden form. .



one can ask

did you stop to smell
mushrooms and roses
the depth of wells

did you sense the touch
granular and moist
from pressing so much

did you emerge
or did it cover you
was it a blanket or a
persistent urge

did you stop breathing
as body to body
upon an earth that brought
you to rest

were you overcome
deep and trusting
gyrating the sun

did you feel
or was it the moment
overwhelming and real

did you know
you are the sun
with the heat to grow

one can ask

— Bernd Hildebrandt

Susanna Barlow

FALL 2015 NEWSLETTER PRINT



Susanna Barlow is currently studying in the Masters of Fine Arts program at Trondheim Academy of Fine Art in Norway. She received her Bachelor of Fine Arts from the University of Alberta in Edmonton, Canada in 2014. Recently she has been artist in residence at Museum Klöster Bentlage in Germany and visiting artist at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna, Austria. She has received a number of grants and awards such as the Royal Canadian Academy for the Arts/C.D. Howe Graduation Award for Art and Design, given to one graduating student across Canada per year. Her work shows in solo and group exhibitions throughout Canada, USA, Germany, China and Japan.

Artist Statement

"It makes a huge difference [...] whether you believe you are walking into a dead geographical location which is used to get to a destination or whether you are emerging out into a landscape that is just as much, if not more, as alive as you are."

— John O'Donohue

The ways in which the psyche and social behavior is shaped by how people interact with the natural environment is at the core of my artistic practice. Informed by my work as a mountain guide, I use both my own lived experience and the social group on a wilderness expedition as a case study in exploring these themes. I often begin a body of work with a series of performance experiments in order to develop a gestural vocabulary to navigate these ontological questions. I then spend more time on singular moments within a happening through image making. The print I made for this edition of SNAPline emerged out of both: an impulse to press into soil with enough pressure for it leaving an impression on my skin; and a poem that a dear friend, Bernd Hildebrandt, wrote for me in regards to the work I was making at the time. We have been exchanging words and images over the past three years. I know much of the poems by heart, and they show me a lot about my practice.

Political theorist Jane Bennett's proposed ontological shift of non-human matter from passive to actant poses a possible theoretical platform to investigate the nature of this affective environmental-human relation that I am exploring. She highlights the role of matter in public life and gives it voice, promoting a greater awareness of matter and sensitivity to our intervention into this ecology. In *Negative Dialectics*, Theodor Adorno points to the aspect of an object which evades our ability to define it. This undefined residue provides fertile grounds for a creative project to unfold. Both Adorno and Bennett are essential to investigating substance between human and non-human; similarly, I aim to imaginatively articulate this interstitial space.

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Out in the Open: Why You Won't Find My Art in Galleries

by Dawn Marie Marchand

*Marchand's installation at the
Indigenous Family Centre on Selkirk
Avenue in Winnipeg, Manitoba.
Photo credit: Greg Littlejohn.*



I WAS TOLD A STORY ABOUT A DIFFERENT TIME ONCE—a time that is so unfamiliar to us now that we scarcely would be able to fathom it. In those days, no one was expendable. Everyone had something that they did that was theirs and they mastered it: some knew plants, some knew animals, some knew songs, some knew ceremonies, but they all knew who they were as human beings. People knew their histories and they knew their stories. They knew where things came from, like their land and their belly buttons. Individuality and autonomy lived in balance with the collective needs of the community. People started learning these things at a young age; by the time they reached young adulthood, most had already begun expressing these stories through their clothing and songs.

This was a time when communities held ceremonies that followed the seasons and the stages of life. Some nations maintained a long history of depicting a yearly symbol of the most important event on a robe, while others depicted their stories on the liners in their winter lodges. Some other nations passed on their stories from one generation to the next through songs and oral histories. It was the role and responsibility of these storytellers to preserve these stories through the process of re-telling and re-imagining them. The art was survival. The art was life. The art grounded you in an identity and an understanding of the world you inhabited.

Stories are sacred and some stories need to be told by people who have proven that they can be trusted to carry them. Most of my personal work comes from knowing and carrying this story and others like it. I cannot speak for anyone else—I can only tell you my story and how I see things. I don't tell it to eliminate the stories of others or say that their stories have less weight. I tell it because it's time to make room for new pedagogies and epistemologies. There are other ways of knowing, doing, and being, which have been buried and hidden for too long. I belong to one of the first full generations out of the Indian Residential School System. We are the first allowed to know our language and our culture, and the first to outwardly embrace what that means. We refuse to move back into the shadows.

When I was approached to do an installation for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), I felt unworthy. As an artist, I am still learning about the role I play in my community. I knew I would be expected to carry the stories of the people who participated. These would be sacred stories that cut deep into their humanity, and they would need to be honoured and handled with care. To do this work, I would have to make an ugly statement in a beautiful way in order to offer ways of healing. I would not be able to just hang it on a wall and walk away for the duration of the run. With this in mind, I decided to seek counsel.

After asking others who I admire and respect for their thoughts, and after going to ceremony, I knew what I had to do. I would ask community

members to share their stories on slips of paper that would be collaged onto a structure, representing the Indian Residential School. In acquiring the artwork, I went to many communities in Alberta to do workshops. It was while our hands were working, we would share stories. Occasionally a story would be told that was too painful for the survivors to tell themselves. At this point we exchanged tobacco, which allowed me to hold the stories and do my best to honour them.

Not all stories were traumatic—the messages from the youth to the survivors were often inspiringly hopeful. Ultimately, they all just wanted to be heard. The assault on their culture and language, however, was real. To help deal with the pain, I asked people to hold a stone in their left hand while they walked around the installation and leave it with me when they finished. From the TRC, the stones were laid on the paths of the Healing Garden at Blue Quills First Nations University. Symbolizing the community's hurt, the stones were set down under the feet of the survivors as a literal stepping-stone towards healing. Every other time the installation has been requested, the stones stay in the community in order to continue their conversations and the process of letting go of their pain.

Chances are that you have not seen my work in galleries. It is likely you have encountered it in more unconventional venues like the Edmonton International Folk Festival, in Edmonton City Hall, the CBC Main Stage, the Big Tent at The Works Art & Design Festival, or part of the Rubaboo Indigenous Arts Festival. You might find it in the inner city of Winnipeg or the recreation centre of a Reserve. The truth is that I do not make much of an effort to exhibit in major galleries anymore. It is not the audience I am trying to reach. I no longer believe art should be comfortable or removed from the community. For me it is about cultural survivance and transmission. It requires hard conversations that need to be removed from the control of institutions. They need to happen in the community from the voices of the ones most invested because those voices are the most neglected. They are neglected because they make us uncomfortable.

I take it into the places that need it, into the places where people are. I give the tools back into the hands of the broken because they are the ones who need hope. They need to see themselves in the world telling their stories, unashamed. They need the opportunity to see themselves for who they are and not just how the world sees them. My responsibility is to the stories and to the people telling them. Other artists have other opinions and ways of navigating this. For myself, I choose to honour the old stories. If asked to do similar work again, it will be done with the same protocol and ceremony, respecting the people first. I have learned that this process is not wrong or backwards; it is just my way.

ekosi maka. ■

A Scream in Havana!

Tania Bruguera and the political impact of arts-based activism

by Ana Ruiz

Participants in Tatlin's Whisper #6

(Havana Version) in 2009

Accessed at www.art21.org in August 2015.



THE REBELLIOUSNESS ASSOCIATED with both art and activism provokes the romantic imagination of audiences, overshadowing the political content and context of the piece. Additionally, the representation of the artist as an unbiased genius by the mass media often leads to depictions of art/activism as intrinsically and perpetually right

The international outpour of support for the internationally-celebrated Cuban performance artist Tania Bruguera can be used as a recent example to challenge these assumptions. The context was a deeply political one: Cuba and the United States had announced in December 2014 the reestablishment of diplomatic relations suspended since 1961. Thousands of foreigners inundated the Cuban capital in the aftermath, eager to witness the island before changes took place.

In the midst of the heated discussion between supporters and opponents of the diplomatic reestablishment, Tania Bruguera traveled to Havana from the United States and proposed her performance piece *Tatlin's Whisper #7* to the Cuban National Council for the Visual Arts. In essence, the proposed performance was a re-enactment of *Tatlin's Whisper #6*, shown by Bruguera in Havana during the 10th Havana Biennial in 2009. *Tatlin's Whisper #6* took place in Old Havana, at the courtyard of the Centro Wifredo Lam, the organizing institution of the Biennial. Aesthetically, the *Tatlin's Whisper #6* copied the visual characteristics of one particu-

larly memorable speech of Fidel Castro in 1959, during which a white dove landed on his shoulder and remained for an unnatural amount of time to the awe of a large Cuban audience. *Tatlin's Whisper #6* lasted forty five minutes, and had thirty nine interventions from members of the audience. Each participant could deliver a 60 seconds-long lecture, to be delivered from a podium through a microphone connected to speakers, while two actors dressed in military green placed and held a dove on the right shoulder of each orator.

The main objective of the performance according to Bruguera was to challenge governmental control over communication channels by allowing ordinary Cubans to speak without censorship for a full minute. However, the large majority of the interventions were delivered by prominent members of the Cuban political dissidence who enjoy a recognizable international profile. The most notable example was the Cuban political blogger Yoani Sanchez, a regular contributor to the Huffington Post.

Tatlin's Whisper #7 proposed the same aesthetic and guiding objectives but in a larger format. Bruguera's desired location for her performance was Revolution Square in Havana. This is one of the largest public plazas in the continent with 7 square miles of surface area, surrounded by ministries and other governmental institutions. Its political significance looms large in the Cuban imaginary, specifically as the evocative podium of the

Anonymous photographer captures Fidel Castro addressing the a Cuban audience in 1959.
 Accessed at www.taniabruguera.com in August 2015.

Revolution Square in Havana, Cuba.
 Photo by Ana Ruiz



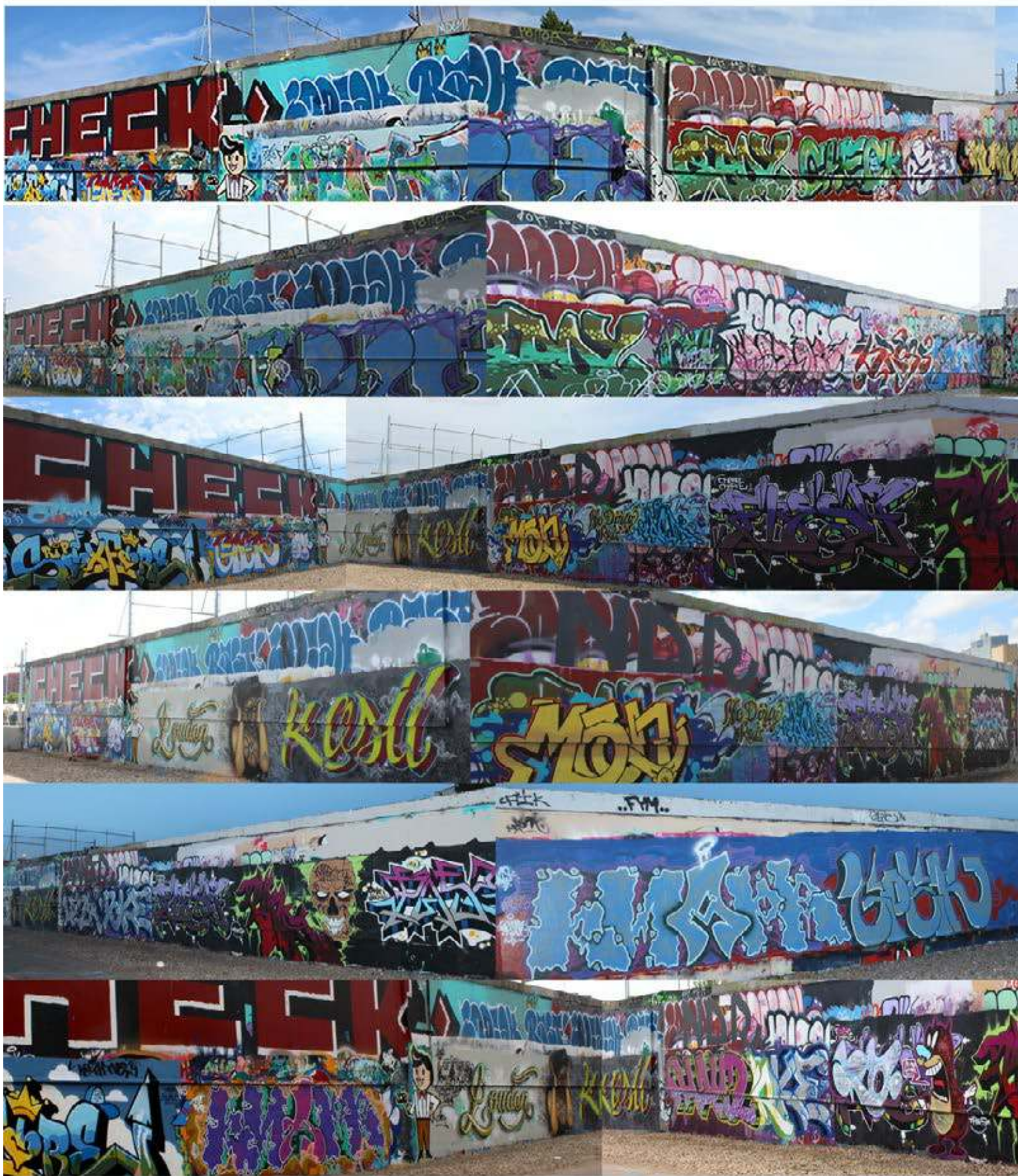
Cuban revolutionary government. Historic speeches have been witnessed by audiences of over a million people in Revolution Square, including sermons delivered by two different popes. Every year since 1959 Fidel Castro has delivered a speech on New Year's Eve, which is also the date of the Revolution anniversary. Incidentally, Bruguera requested indefinite use of the space in late December 2014, a request that if granted would have interfered with preparations for the Cuban equivalent of the State of the Union Address. Her request was not even denied by Cuban cultural institutions, but instead amended. She was offered alternative spaces—including the atrium of the high-profile National Museum of Fine Arts (MNBA) in Havana—for *Tatlin's Whisper #7*, with a time frame of 90 minutes. Not bad for a performance that had already been shown in Havana, and at the Tate Modern in London before that. Declining the offer, Bruguera conjured a communications campaign and attempted the execution of the performance at Revolution Square on December 30th. She was taken into custody and released promptly, but penalized with the retention of her Cuban passport by the authorities.

The press rapidly framed the situation as a clear example of the Cuban government lack of respect for human rights. Political commentators in Canada and the United States—including the *Globe and Mail*—wondered about the implications of Bruguera's plight in the Cuba-United States negotiations. Hundreds of people

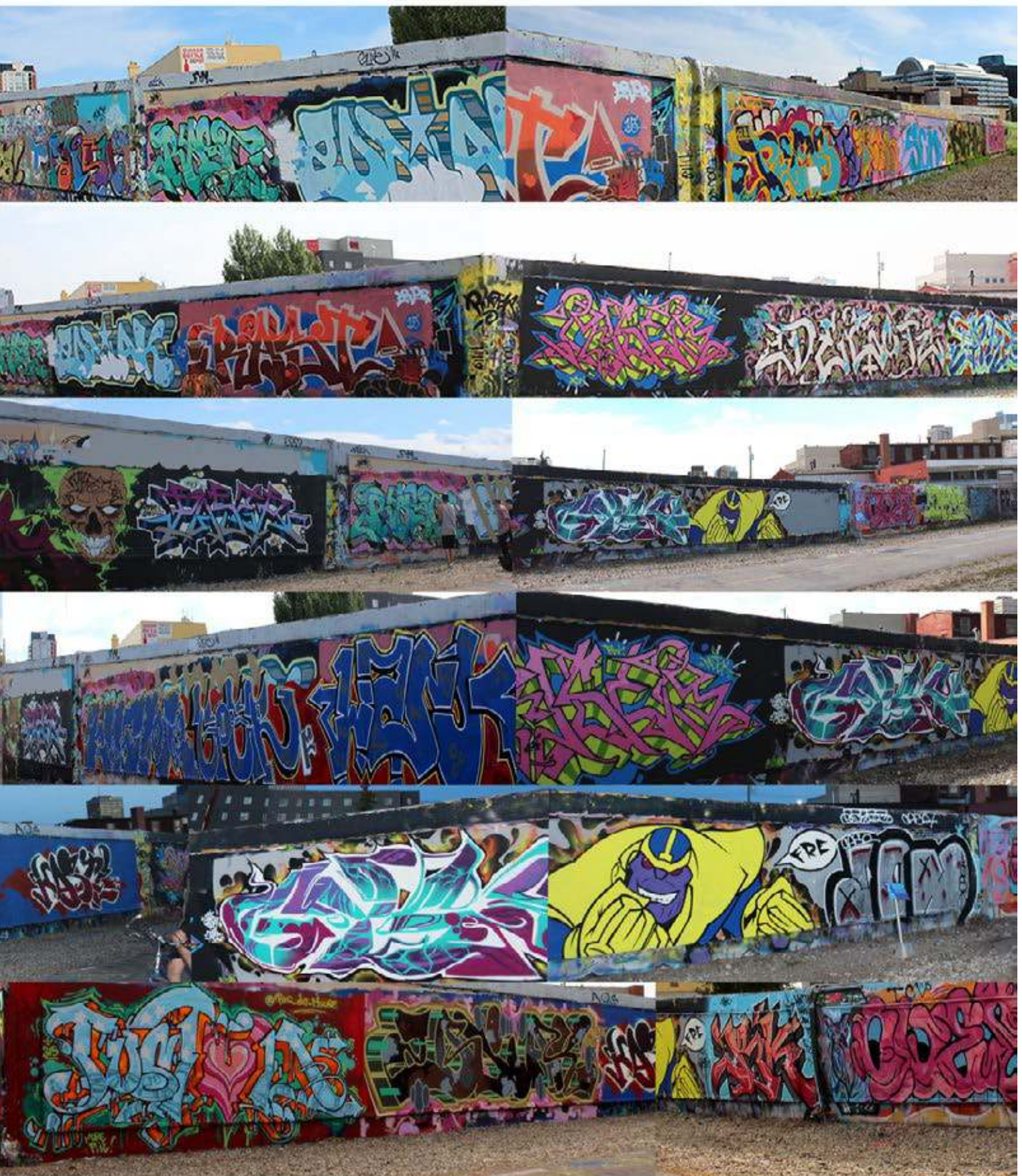
signed a letter addressed to Cuban President Raul Castro opposing the hours-long incarceration of Bruguera, written days after she was released. Artists and curators in North America and Europe declared a boycott to the 11th edition of the Havana Biennial, backed by the organizers of the Venice Biennial, a competing arts event.

The reaction of the arts community and other observers led to negative consequences for the Cuban population. For instance, the media controversy created around the proposed performance constituted a political obstacle to recently announced talks of diplomatic reestablishment. These included public statements of concern by the U.S. State Department, an institution that at the time still included Cuba in its list of State-Sponsors of Terrorism. Furthermore, the situation occasioned economic losses to Cuba-based artists as a result of the international boycott of the 11th Havana Biennial.

The employment of art as a medium of activism should not automatically condone actions that—intended or not—can do lasting damage to related groups and individuals. Political context should be explored and included in the creative process as an important procedural consideration, and not an obstacle to be enthusiastically bulldozed by the artist. ■



SNAPLINE FALL 2015 /
SIX WEEKS OF FREE WALLS: PHOTO ESSAY BY KATIE TASA



In 2002 the city partnered up with the Edmonton Arts Council to provide a legal site with safety guidelines for street artists to practice in Edmonton. We now have three open source street art sites, which are commonly known as the Free Walls. The one photographed here is the first of the three, and is located at the portal of the LRT on 95th Ave and 105 Street. Over the course of six weeks I photographed the wall to document its changes. From this we can see that Edmonton has a lively and diverse street art scene. – Katie Tasa

Beware of Artists

by Mike Hudema

THE FIGHT AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE IS A BIG ONE. It means challenging the largest corporations on the planet, transforming many aspects of current society, and trying to do it all in an ever shortening timeline.

The stakes are high. Every day we fail to take action the impacts of climate change grow. Already lives have been lost and communities that have been forced to move due to changes in climate. Life as we know it hangs in the balance and we are the last generation that has the ability to do something about it.

It's a heavy burden and the greatest opportunity we will ever have to make lasting changes.

Within this context we have seen unlikely alliances between First Nations and ranchers, between environmentalists and big labour, and between people of different ages, ethnicities, classes, and backgrounds. It's happened partially out of necessity and partially because of how many issues the climate crisis brings together.

All along the way, helping to weave the threads, spread the word, and spur action have been artists.

Poets sent in verses to complete an anthology of resistance that if each letter was put together end-to-end would stretch the length of the proposed Enbridge Northern Gateway Tar sands Pipeline.

Indigenous artists from the Lummi First Nation carved a sacred totem pole, drove it along the KinderMorgan pipeline route and delivered it to the Beaver Lake Cree First Nation (just one of the many First Nations impacted by the tarsands). They did it as a show of solidarity and to unite their communities together in an unbroken wall of resistance to the project.



In the U.S., artist John Quigley along with farmers, ranchers and Native American tribes (the Cowboy and Indian Alliance) turned a farmers field into an 80-football field large message to President Obama to reject the Keystone XL pipeline.



In Ontario, a puppeteer used puppets to spread the word about the threats that Energy East pipeline would bring.

In Quebec, 25,000 people, dressed in red, flooded the area near the Quebec parliament to create the lasting image of a thermometer whose temperatures are rising by the second.



Here in Alberta the artistic voices standing for climate action may be a little more muted but they're there. Spoken word artists have written climate odes, movement artists have staged critiques, and some theatre artists have crafted works critiquing the petro state, but we need more.

Alberta pollutes more than Ontario, Quebec and soon BC combined. The tar sands cast its long shadow over this province and limits our governments vision.

We need artists to call for change, to help us dream again, to show us the cracks through which we can escape and to bring us together. Artists are dangerous because, as the Queen said, they mix with all classes

and touch us in a way that statistics or reports can't.

At this time, as the Province wrestles with what to do to confront the climate crisis, we need that call.

Whatever your medium you can help turn the tide. You can help turn Alberta from the 'tar sands province' into the province of the sun, from one that tramples Indigenous and Metis Rights to one that support and uplifts them, and from one where a only few benefit to a place where we all do.

So artists unleash your pens, unfurl your memes, spread your mind bombs and together let's change history.

Artists of the world unite, we have nothing to lose but everything.. ■

"Beware of Artists: they mix with all the classes of society and are therefore most dangerous."

— QUEEN VICTORIA

Mike Hudema is an activist and Green Energy Campaigner with Greenpeace. He lives and works in Edmonton AB.

For more information on how to support your Greenpeace Edmonton local group, please visit: www.greenpeace.org or contact greenpeaceedmontonlocalgroup@gmail.com.

Little Versailles

by Zach Polis

So this was Murata Takahashi's world. I saw photos of this room once in a magazine. The writer had done an extensive profile of Takahashi. Takahashi had called this room his "Little Versailles".

So much of the room was empty corridor with crystal chandeliers, monstrous windows, and gold leaf folding screens depicting tigers, cranes, and cherry blossoms.

Takahashi was clipping along. Rather, we were clipping along. Echoes of a famously empty room.

But then, I heard the crash of brass coming from the end of the hall.

I know this one. But how do I know this one? I hate jazz.

The soundtrack from the film *The Glamorous Blonde* rolled down the hall. The opening trumpet solo bit the air, rapid-fire, busy lips and tight cheekbones busting out that seminal motif. A jewel thief has just been stabbed; the cloaked murderer runs into a busy disco and vanishes. It was a personal obsession of the director Hans Rainer Kelley to never stop the out of control jazz even when a scene conventionally demanded silence. This novel technique cemented his fame among cinephiles the world over.

It seemed improbable to associate memories and information with this song that were mine. By the time we reached the bathroom where the music was coming from, I attributed that bank of cinema-related knowledge to being in Takahashi's head more than me picking up on a long forgotten memory. Sometimes his thoughts and mine would skate together and sometimes they'd drift far away from each other.

The bathroom wasn't so much a bathroom as it was an oasis of fantasy. Every item in this room contained its own flash of brilliance, a curated vision. Reclining or at play, sculptures of cherubs and Buddhist deities in positions of leisure surrounded a grand bath. There was a plump sofa in the corner of the room and ornate chairs carefully scattered around it. We were headed to the hanging mirror beside the chairs and sofa.

Looking in the mirror I saw a man clad in black with a wrinkled but dignified face, soft brown eyes, and snowy hair.

The speakers released a dangerous solo by trumpet player Franz Choi Altoon, scoring the scene where the glamorous blonde is swimming nude (with the exception of a large string of pearls around her neck) in her pool.

Takahashi glanced at the empty bath and gave a sigh.

He pinned a rose corsage neatly on his chest.

The violins and viola crept in like soft daylight, and then a woman's voice:

*I'll go
But I couldn't help to think
All was well
But now I know
We can't have what we had again
Our love, a flare of golden light,
Will be difficult to repeat
I had beginner's luck
Which I just couldn't keep*

"Luxury is exhilarating, isn't it?"

"Yes, I suppose so," said Takahashi.

Wait. Who said that?

"But wouldn't you like to do what you came here to do? Or have you grown too comfortable with the lifestyle?"

It was the woman with the blue bob.

"Go on. Tap some of those displays in front of you. Hint: start with the green triangles."

The green triangle flashed then deformed into three red squares connected by their points.

"Spin those around and tap those blue circles on the display. After that, you should get the hang of things."

She was right. I wasn't sophisticated by any means, but I could see I was able to influence some control over Takahashi's body. My own little robot. I ran his fingers through his hair. I made him squint at his mirror's reflection and scrunch his nose. Hell, I even got him to flap one of his arms like a weirdo. That surprised him.

We backed away from the mirror.

"Hmm. Liberating. But it's best I get going. I can't be late," said Takahashi.

Yes, that's right. Keigo had said Takahashi would be meeting with Hayashi Toshi today, the man responsible for the tight price regulations on entrainment chips. Perfect.

There would be no evidence for what

I intended for the two of them. Except maybe with the Human Shop, but I wasn't their first customer.

We left the bathroom and started down the hall. I hit a few more symbols to suss out what I could do with him. Takahashi began sprinting down the hall. The sound of his footsteps bounced freely across the marble, crystal, and glass.

It competed with *The Glamorous Blonde* for airspace.

But we weren't headed to wherever Takahashi thought he was going next. We weren't headed to wherever I thought we were going next!

As we were nearing the end of the hall, with the power of an unseen force — my symbol-mashing incompetence — Takahashi took a sudden left and smashed through one of the monstrous windows.

We plunged into the air and the earth was falling quickly to meet us.

Black smeared the senses.

Takahashi was dead.

I was sure of it.

And me?

"Surely, you could've told us what you were planning on doing," said the voice of the blue-haired woman. "We would've hated to see him take a piece of your mind with him when he died. Your great mind tossed into the vapor like watermelon chunks dissipating at volatile speeds into nothingness. Then again, there wouldn't have been much mind to lose to begin with."

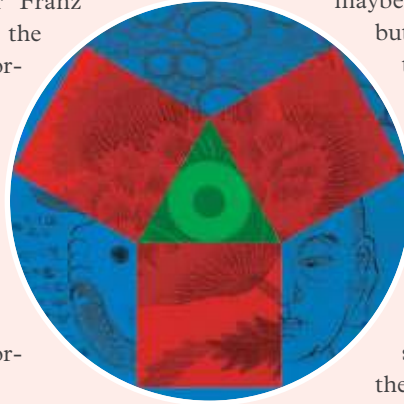
"You said it was intuitive."

Just the thought. That's all I had of me that I could sense.

"Am I back?"

"Your body never left the shop. But you mean that brilliant mind of yours? No. It would've taken too long to pull it back. We dumped you into the nearest stream of consciousness we could find."

Which was? ■



PART THREE OF A SERIALIZED NOVELLA INSPIRED BY EXHIBITIONS AT SNAP GALLERY.

Zach Polis writes. One dry martini later, truth strips the rest of this biography cool and clean. Cheers, Mr. Hemingway!

Theory & Practice: The Artist as Advocate

by Sydney Lancaster

Being an artist has never been an easy career choice. Long hours & low financial return are the norm, and frequently artists are faced with everything from skepticism to hostility when they assert that their creative practice is *work*, and a 'real' job. And yet, the number of artists in Alberta has increased in the last couple of decades, we have a strong collection of public and commercial galleries and artist-run centres, and a growing number of new alternative spaces being established. Labour Force Survey results from 2011 show a 58% increase in the number of artists in the province from 1989-2013; Alberta's 11,300 artists comprise 8% of Canada's artists; 12% of Alberta's artists are visual artists.¹

Alberta artists' average incomes are 44% below the labour force average; for visual artists, that difference is a staggering 58%.²

To counter those depressing numbers, it's good to remind ourselves that CARFAC advocates for artists nationally, and that Alberta also has a long history of very real political activism & advocacy amongst its visual artists. The work of Sylvain Voyer and other pioneering artists in Edmonton who started Latitude 53 artist-run centre, and contributed to CARFAC* in its infancy come immediately to mind.



(l to r) Don Mabie, Guiseppe Albi, and Sylvain Voyer in Latitude 53 Office. Image from *Latitude 53: A Decade*.

The original Latitude 53 at 10048 - 101a Avenue "served as the [first-ever] office and meeting space for CAR/FAC ... Harry Savage, Sylvain Voyer, Guiseppe Albi, Bob Iveson, Tommie Gallie, Ray St Arnaud, Craig Pelzer, and Glen Guillet being some of the artists"³ who were heavily involved in advocacy locally and nationally. Sylvain was also president of CARFAC national from 1971-76: an Alberta voice benefitting artists across the country. There have been Alberta artists involved in CARFAC and many other initiatives over the last 40 years, of course, including the re-establishment of a provincial affiliate—Visual Arts Alberta - CARFAC—in September 2012.

I became a member of CARFAC and Visual Arts Alberta in 2010, at a time when it was generally felt in the sector that government budgets would continue to place increasing economic pressure on arts non-profits, and there seemed to be little in the way of concrete policy that reflected support for the economic realities of artists' professional lives.

Times change, sometimes overnight. For the first time in living memory, Alberta has a government that is not dominated by conservatives.

There is real potential—for the first time in many years—for provincial economic policy to really benefit both individuals and organizations in the arts & culture sector. There's never been a better time to look back and keep moving forward; we can draw on our history in developing new strategies and tools now to improve our economic outlook. The NDP has promised real change in platform statements since 2012—increases to AFA funding and support for Status of the Artist Legislation, for starters⁵. Those potential improvements may feel irrelevant, or not part of 'real life', for many visual artists. But the truth of the matter is that these developments have the cumulative effect of securing recognition for the value of the professional artist's work as a *profession, as work*. When a new agreement or bill or law is passed that supports artists' careers, it's an opportunity to make sure that theory becomes practice.⁶



CARFAC members from across Canada at Supreme Court Hearing; Chris W Carson (standing) & Paddy Lamb (seated), center, from Visual Arts Alberta - CARFAC. Image courtesy CARFAC National.

We can advocate together for changes that have a real impact on economic & cultural policy. That policy is the framework within which individual artists (and the organizations that support them in various ways) make a case for what they do, in the real world. Policy & political commitments can help create a climate in which more artists can make their practices self-sustaining; they can support a shift in thinking whereby artists no longer have to answer the question "But what do you do for money?"⁷

Which brings us to activism and advocacy—and the reality of why engagement and action is necessary, now more than ever.



Image Courtesy CARFAC Ontario.

There's much still to be done to improve the socio-economic position of professional artists in Edmonton and in Alberta, as the numbers clearly show. The adoption of Status of the Artist legislation and the Artist Resale Right⁸ would be good first steps in paving the way for substantive, long term changes. But that kind of change needs support.

When many artists speak together, that united voice has greater impact; we can be heard. We need to have active discussions about our concrete needs, and take responsibility for being part of the changes we want to see. We collectively need to avoid situations that perpetuate a climate in which our work and our profession are devalued. If, as individuals, we make the effort to support those ideas, initiatives, and organizations that are trying to make a difference, we all benefit. ■

NOTES

*CARFAC = Canadian Artists' Representation/Federation des Artistes Canadienne.
www.carfac.ca

1. "Artists and Cultural Workers in Canada's Provinces and Territories" 22 October 2014, at: <http://www.hillstrategies.com/content/artists-and-cultural-workers-canada-s-provinces-and-territories>
2. "Artists and Cultural Workers in Canada's Provinces and Territories" 22 October 2014, at: <http://www.hillstrategies.com/content/artists-and-cultural-workers-canada-s-provinces-and-territories>
3. "The Founders" in *Latitude 53: A Decade*. Exhibition Catalogue. Co-produced by Latitude 53, Alberta Art Foundation, and Alberta Culture, 1973. p.6
4. My thanks to April Britski-Holt, Executive Director of CARFAC National, for providing me with a historical list of Alberta Representatives and council members. These artists include: Sylvain Voyer, Jack Forbes, Don Mabie, Glen Guillet, Bob Iveson, Joseph Reeder, Marcia Johnson, Jeka Arnold. Margaret Witschl was Alberta representative on the CARFAC national board from 2008 - 2012, and Strathcona County's Paddy Lamb is the current Alberta Representative and Secretary. Margaret and Paddy were a vital part of re-establishing an official provincial affiliate to CARFAC here in Alberta.
5. <http://www.pacedmonton.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/ABpoliticalPartiesAskResponse1.pdf>
<http://www.citiesmatter.ca/2015/04/albertas-ndp-response-to-question-4.html>
 Several provinces already have Status of the Artist Legislation, including Saskatchewan, Ontario, Quebec, and Nova Scotia— as we do federally; although a bit out of date, the following document is a good source of background information regarding why this legislation is important: <http://ccarts.ca/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/StatusoftheArtistReport1126101-Copy.pdf>
6. Some examples from CARFAC regarding advocacy that has affected real change for the benefit of artists economically, see:
 The CARFAC minimum fee schedule and its history: <http://www.carfac.ca/tools/fees/>
 The Supreme Court Case against the National Gallery, and the subsequent agreement: <http://www.carfac.ca/agreements/>
<http://www.carfac.ca/initiatives/national-gallery-negotiations/>
7. <http://calgaryherald.com/entertainment/local-arts/meet-albertas-new-arts-and-culture-minister>
 "A Statistical Profile of Artists and Cultural Workers in Canada" in Statistical Insights on the Arts, Vol 12 No 2, Hill Strategies Research Inc, 7 October 2014, at: <http://www.hillstrategies.com/content/statistical-profile-artists-and-cultural-workers-canada>
 "Artists and Cultural Workers in Canadian Municipalities" 3 December 2014, at: <http://www.hillstrategies.com/content/artists-and-cultural-workers-canadian-municipalities>
8. Status of the Artist Legislation:
 Federal: <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/S%2D19.6/>
 Saskatchewan: <http://www.publications.gov.sk.ca/deplst.cfm?d=96&c=645>
 Nova Scotia: <https://cch.novascotia.ca/stories/status-artist>
 Ontario: <http://www.carfacontario.ca/Status-of-Ontarios-Artists-Advocacy-Letter>
 Quebec: http://www2.publicationsduquebec.gouv.qc.ca/dynamicSearch/telecharge.php?type=2&file=/S_32_01/S32_01_A.html
 Summary of various legislation: http://artsnb.ca/site/en/files/2012/05/status_of_the_artist_EN.pdf
 Artist Resale Right: <http://www.carfac.ca/news/2013/07/10/1047/>

Sydney Lancaster is an Edmonton-based multidisciplinary visual artist. She is an active member of the Edmonton visual arts community, and is board president for Visual Arts Alberta – CARFAC and supports Harcourt House, Latitude 53, SNAP, PACE, and EAC with volunteer time and/or membership. Her work explores the relationship between objects, memory, and identity. See sydneylancaster.com for more info.

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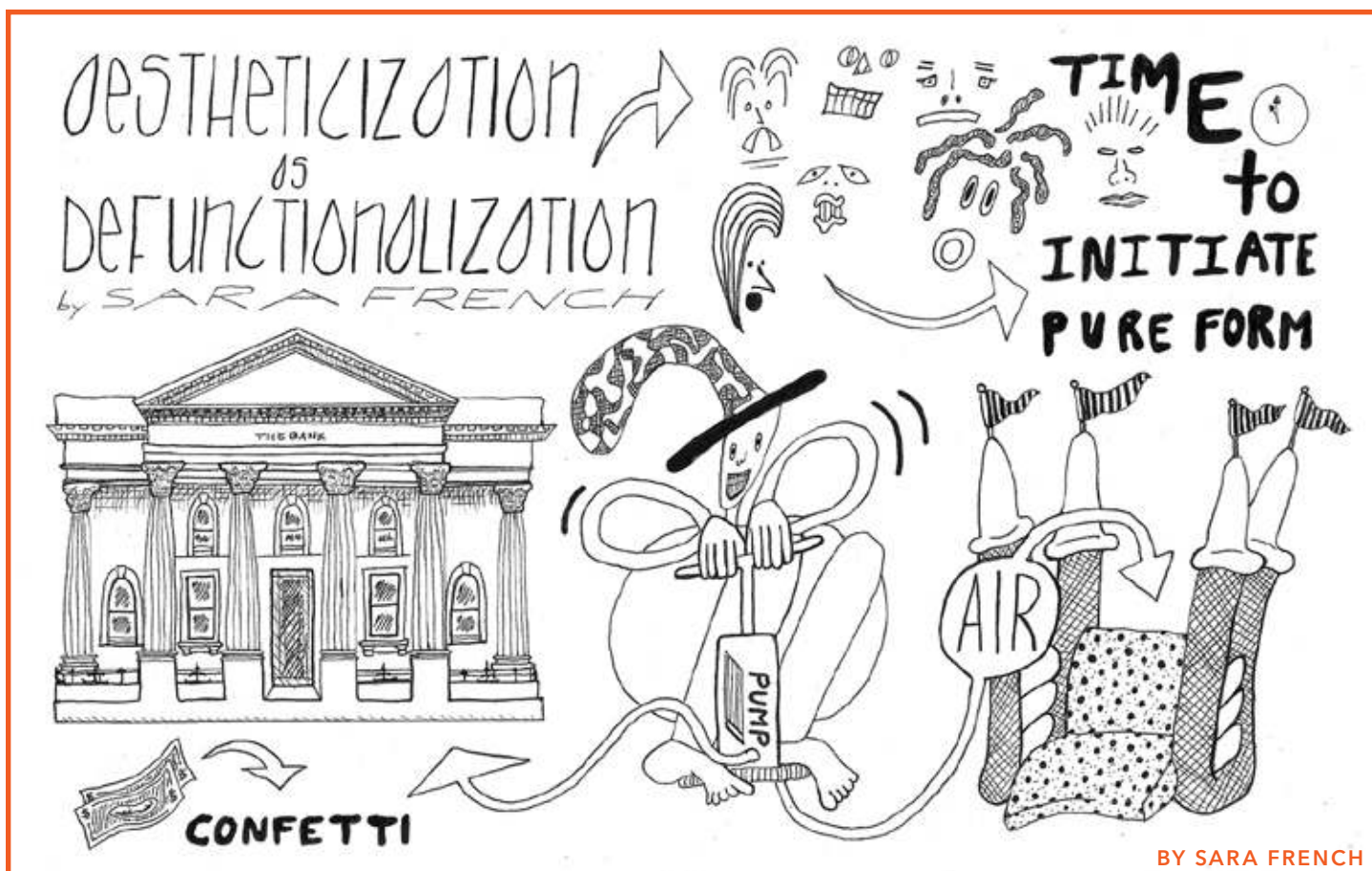
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Brown, Black & Fierce Collective



Brown, Black, & Fierce is a small collective dedicated to centering the experiences of Indigenous and racialized people in Edmonton-Amiskwaciwaskahikan. In the spring of this year, a few of us were inspired to create a space after growing quickly disconcerted at the lack of representation of our identities in Edmonton-Amiskwaciwaskahikan's art community, queer community, and racialized communities. In the words of Audrey Lourde, "there's no single thing as a single issue struggle because we do not live single issue lives". This lead us to create our one day interdisciplinary festival in October, called Brown, Black, & Fierce.

We are inspired by all the talent and power of Indigenous and racialized artists who survive, thrive, heal, and CREATE things everyday in the face of much adversity. We are excited about using art as a tool for transformation, healing from trauma, and building community resilience by creating a safe environment for artistic exploration while promoting the visibility of Indigenous and racialized artists in Edmonton, and supporting the development of up and coming artists through social media and outreach to other arts festivals.

In a time where black communities are targets of violence in church shootings, where Muslim communities are terrorized by media and government scapegoating, and Indigenous women go missing without their disappearances being investigated, it is essential that we have means of finding each other and building support and solidarity. Our communities are already full of knowledge and experience, and we can build capacity between communities by providing opportunities for community members to create their own workshops and facilitate them in a safer space.

Already we have received an overwhelming amount of performance submissions and workshop proposals from people in Edmonton-Amiskwaciwaskahikan and across Turtle Island, which clearly speaks to the yearning for a space like this. We welcome the support of white and straight allies in the form of monetary donations which can be sent to brownblackfierce@gmail.com, as well as in-kind donations and volunteer support. We'll see you in October.



My Process with AJA Louden | @ajalouden | @AJALouden

How would you describe your practice? I'm a visual artist, primarily working in aerosol. My personal work often talks about conflict & power imbalances. I do a lot of work with murals.

In your opinion, what is the connection between art and activism? Where does graffiti fit in?

I see art as deeply connected to activism – art is often used as a tool to inspire, to motivate, and to inform. Since it can take so many different forms, and the experience of it can be shared and still feel very personal, it has power. There's a long history of graffiti in particular being used as part of activist movements, and modern graffiti in particular has several characteristics that make it really effective. During times when information sources are tightly controlled, graffiti is loud and direct. It can exist as a sole source of unsanctioned public art, with no committee oversight or censorship, which I think a lot of people connect to. It can also just be quick and grimy and raw, and the format or even just the look become the message.

What does "Activism" mean to you? It's a blanket term describing a fairly wide variety of actions mostly related to promoting an idea. Context is really important – in many situations, just gathering and disseminating information can be a form of activism. It's often thought of as direct action, which is a crucial part, but it can be more subtle than that. I think the feeling of activism is important: that feeling of punching upward at an oppressor, (perceived or real) battling for an ideal, can be part of what makes the idea of activism potent and attractive. By no means does that lessen the value.

What role do you think graffiti can (or does) play in activism? What are some of the ways it can positively or negatively affect communities? Graffiti can be a powerful tool – spreading ideas quickly by putting them in the forefront, making the unsaid visible. Subversion too, changing the meaning of something that exists already, has been part of graffiti and street art for a long time, particularly in relation to advertising. Graffiti can absolutely be damaging as well – when people just see an aesthetic of destruction, that becomes the dominant message communicated, and it can make people mad or intimidated. If the artwork is primarily angry or violent, it can reflect some un-

derlying frustrations within segments of the community, which can be ugly and uncomfortable to look at and way easier to ignore. Even just something that looks unfamiliar can spark unease. Graffiti is incredibly accessible, and done in the right places with the right messages it can make powerful public statements that can unify and build identity, but like anything in the public sphere the message can be hard to control and interpretations can vary. Effective messages require a receptive audience and a capable communicator, and different communities will react differently.

Can you tell us about some of the more recent projects you've been involved with? Recently I've been working with the John Humphries Centre and fellow artist Aaron Paquette on the YEG Dignity Campaign. It's a participatory public art project that aims to raise awareness about youth poverty in Edmonton, and how poverty affects facets of humanity that we don't always notice. It's been an awesome project so far, and we were able to engage the public during events in Churchill Square, City Center Mall, and around the Fringe Festival. It's a 4 part series, and the last one is scheduled for September 21 at Boyle Street Community Center – come check it out and help Aaron and I make a mural! No experience required and all ages welcome, we just want to help get some conversations started.

I also recently helped create and run Aerosol Arena, an event put on by myself and the Creative Clubhouse, and sponsored by Montana Cans, Molotow, the Paint Spot, and Cowan Graphics. It was a live battle between more than 15 of the city's top graffiti and street artists, and the public was able to purchase the artwork after the event, all as part of Art Walk on Whyte ave.

I've also got a bunch of private and public murals lined up in the near future that I'm really looking forward to.

What is the free wall? Aerosol Academy? The free walls are spaces in Edmonton it's legal to paint public art. There are a few restrictions related to community guidelines, so it's not quite as free as graffiti, but they're amazing, constantly changing spaces where people create public art. There is one in Millwoods, one on Whyte ave, and one downtown. The southside locations are part of

"Context is really important – in many situations, just gathering and disseminating information can be a form of activism."

a pilot project (the Open Source Street Art Walls project) by the Edmonton Arts Council.

Aerosol Academy is a program I created in 2011 to teach people about the history, culture, tools and techniques of graffiti and street art. I think there's a lot of misconceptions about the art-forms, but also a ton of intrigue and interest. I think it can be a way into the world of art that may not otherwise appeal to someone – galleries or museums can often be intimidating or unrelatable. As a society we send a lot of mixed messages. I see graffiti celebrated in advertising and on clothing all the time, but we also demonize it. I teach the program independently, often through art stores or at the free walls.

Do you ever work in other art forms? A bit – I'm a designer as well, and have done some work in architectural signage and wayfinding, some sculpture, and I paint with acrylics a little in the winter.

What's your take on the increasing commercialization of graffiti art? Do you think it signals the legitimization of the practice, or is the practice still hotly contested? I think it will continue. There will always be a purely rebellious, untamable segment of graffiti that will be impossible to capture and commercialize – I think that's the part of it that is tied to our natural need to see ourselves reflected in our surroundings. In a sense it's a way of confirming this is real and the external world exists. As a society we're so moored to our current ideas around ownership and property that I don't think graffiti will ever become fully 'legitimized'. People will always be battling to control the look of publicly shared visual spaces, and graffiti is just one voice at that table. ■

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