

SNAPLine

SUMMER 2016

Newsletter artist:
JESSICA HONG



**DIGITAL
CULTURE**

CONTRIBUTIONS BY:

Carolyn Jervis, Alexander Stewart, Adam Waldron-Blain

FEATURING: Robin Smith-Peck, Beth Howe & Clive McCarthy

UPCOMING:

Block Out!

June 18, 2016



SOCIETY OF NORTHERN ALBERTA 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

Bring on summer! Let me kick it off with an introduction: I am one of the newest members of SNAP's incredibly generous and invested Board of Directors. As our fearless leader and President, Brenda Malkinson, noted in the Spring 2016 SNAPLine, each edition of SNAPLine will now feature a different Board member as author of this column; as a newbie, I'm delighted to be the first to give this intro message a go.

I've been a keen supporter of SNAP since I moved to Alberta in 2013, and while not a printmaker myself, I've felt quite welcomed as a member of the SNAP community. As a Sponsor member, I delight each quarter in receiving my SNAPLine edition and the fine prints that come along with it as a benefit of that membership. No doubt, then, that one of my first shared interests on the Board has been our great organization's membership program. I am excited to report that this Summer the Board is moving forward with an enhanced commitment to help promote the benefits of membership, grow its ranks, and celebrate its current members, both artists and non-artists alike.

For me—working both with SNAP and on exhibitions at the Art Gallery of Alberta—one pleasure of being involved in Alberta's vibrant arts scene is the continual and meaningful engagement of arts supporters in our community. Let's continue to let them know the good work that's being done in our studios, galleries, and public programs. This edition of SNAPLine features our new Member News section and we look forward to hearing more news from you members for upcoming editions. Share your successes and stories by email your announcements to communications@snapartists.com

We're looking forward to a summer of events, openings and print shop programs, and on behalf of the Board I thank you all for your ongoing support and participation in our continued efforts to keep SNAP great. Don't forget that you can drop us a line anytime at board@snapartists.com

In the words of a true artist we've been thinking on recently, and in the spirit of this Digital Culture edition of SNAPLine:

"A strong spirit transcends rules."

— Prince

Sincerely,
Laura Ritchie, Director



Message from the Executive Director

Welcome to the Summer Edition of SNAPLine: Digital Culture. This publication, beautifully off-set printed by our Season Sponsor McCallum Printing Group, is dripping with colour and full of thought provoking content. Edmonton artist Jessica Hong brilliantly tackled making a tangible print for our sponsor members that comes to life on the screen if you follow the link to the animated version. Carolyn Jervis takes us deep into the labour politics of online gaming & Alexander Stewart articulates the ever present future of today, walking us through the online revolutions of the 90s to arrive in our post-digital, post-internet age. Stewart has also crafted

a digital culture lexicon on page 7 that has proven to be useful IRL. The Photo Essay from Lexi Pendzich beautifully articulates the irony of producing printed matter about digital culture - reproducing a 198 frame contact sheet of discarded selfies. On page 10 Robin Smith-Peck walks us through her process and the evolution of digital printing and digital tools within her printmaking practice. We have some lovely outdoor inspired workshops planned this summer, you can read more on page 13 & if you haven't picked up your copy of the Edmonton Artists Colouring Book yet, they are available at the gallery for \$20. We look forward to seeing you at SNAP on June 18th for our annual Blockout Block Party!

Sincerely,
April Dean, Executive Director

THIS ISSUE'S CONTRIBUTORS



Carolyn Jervis is an Edmonton based art writer and curator. In 2014 she completed a Master of Arts degree in Art History, Critical Curatorial Studies from the University of British Columbia, where her thesis project explored internet art practices and virtual interfaces through the lens of video game, *The Stanley Parable*. Her current research projects include formulating an exhibition about print ephemera in an alternative religion archive, and expanding her investigation of independently-produced video games. Carolyn is the Exhibition Experience and Interpretation Coordinator at the Art Gallery of Alberta.



Alexander Stewart is an Artist and Designer that works in Emotional Technologies and Speculative Design Fiction. He was born and raised in Edmonton Alberta and attended the University of Alberta for Sculpture, Printmaking and Industrial Design. He received his MFA from the Rhode Island School of Design in Digital+Media, and continues his research into Drones, informal economies, and the way human interaction is mediated by digital technologies.

Jessica Hong

SUMMER 2016 NEWSLETTER PRINT



Jessica Hong is a graphic designer and emerging artist from Edmonton. She likes gradients, minimalism, commercials, humour and creating playfulness in her work. Her prints often combine photography and vibrant colours to construct virtual environments while influencing the viewers idea of reality.

Artist Statement:

Given the theme of digital culture, I wanted to explore ideas of technology distorting our perception of reality and our understanding of photography. Images are so easily enhanced and accessible that we often live in a post-processed version of reality. In this print, a carefully curated environment presents an alternate reality. The viewer is left to wonder what parts of the photograph are altered and unaltered.

Alongside the print is an animated version of the image that looks at the intersection of print and digital media.

Portrait credit: Steven Teeuwsen



Watch the animated version at:
bit.ly/1Z1Kdxn

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Playing the Scab

by Carolyn Jervis

"Sorry, yes I'm stupid, is there an actual game [or] is the game the backstage?"
— cityuser (YouTube screen name)

IMAGINE THAT A VIDEO GAME WAS LIKE A FUNHOUSE:

a rickety wooden set of doors and hallways and rooms full of trick mirrors and bored teenagers that jump out of shadows in clown costumes. Now, imagine you show up at that video-game-funhouse and the staff are on strike. The game experience you expect is rerouted by a pushy voice that ropes you into filling in behind the scenes, and you become an unpaid scab. Rather than playing a game, as we typically understand them, your task becomes creating a fictional player's illusory gameplay experience of intrigue and danger.

With the rise of accessible distribution, indie video games have emerged to upset the very premise of the medium itself. Released on Steam in December, the miniature free game by new game design studio Crows Crows Crows headed by William Pugh, *Dr. Langeskov, The Tiger And The Terribly Cursed Emerald: A Whirlwind Heist* is a humorous play with the opacity of virtual interfaces and the invisibility of the labour that constructs them.¹ As MacKenzie Wark notes in *Gamer Theory*, games are *algorithms*, "a finite set of instructions for accomplishing some task."² The limitations of video games are typically embedded throughout the structural fabric of the game and internalized by viewers, whose obedient following of the rules results in rewards—a point given, life gained or goal achieved.

Video games such as *Dr. Langeskov* are allegorithims for living with the internet of things—the inescapable virtual interfaces that mediate a growing number of daily life operations. As media theorist Alexander Galloway notes,

there is a "necessary precondition" of blackness that lies behind the interfaces we interact with, create, and move through.³ We see only the surface and have no idea what is embedded into the algorithms that shape virtual spaces. *Dr. Langeskov* playfully encourages players to think beyond the pursuit and execution of the rules and to consider instead the very scaffolds that invisibly shape the windows, doors and hallways we virtually navigate.

What Pugh and his team envision in the dark space—behind the scenes of gameplay—is, fittingly, a labour dispute with the usually invisible workers who animate virtual worlds. The work shrouded by interfaces could not be more important to consider: as increasing amounts of labour disappear behind the virtual curtain (think the invisible cavernous online shopping warehouses of Amazon versus the highly visible shopping mall), labour conditions become increasingly precarious.⁴ Stable work covered by employment legislation is replaced by contract positions and piecework. It is hard to protect and support the rights of workers you didn't even know existed. Without realizing, the player of *Dr. Langeskov* acts as a Mechanical Turk, the impersonation of the machine for an unwitting, fictional player of the game-within-the-game.⁵ In doing so, we become free labour.

So yes, cityuser, the actual game—the algorithm—is the backstage. But the real question is not, what are we playing, but rather who is being played? ■

1 *Dr. Langeskov, The Tiger And The Terribly Cursed Emerald: A Whirlwind Heist* (Steam version), Crows Crows Crows (Crows Crows Crows 2015).

2 McKenzie Wark, *Gamer Theory* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 020.

3 Alexander Galloway, "Black Box, Black Bloc," in *Communization and its Discontents*, ed. Benjamin Noys (New York: Minor Compositions, 2011), 237-252.

4 The labour conditions for workers in Amazon's warehouses have been called to question worldwide. For example, see Carole Cadwalladr, "My week as an Amazon insider," *The Guardian*, December 1, 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2013/dec/01/week-amazon-insider-feature-treatment-employees-work>.

5 For an introduction to the concept of the Mechanical Turk as it relates to online piecework, see Shawn Wen, "The Ladies Vanish," *The New Inquiry*, November 11, 2014: <http://thenewinquiry.com/essays/the-ladies-vanish/>.

In the Future, The Artist is Streaming

by Alexander Stewart | futuresdesign.space

I am alarmed about the future of American art. Young people today, immersed in a digital universe, love the volatile excitement of virtual reality, but they lack the patience to steadily contemplate a single image – a complex static object such as a great painting or sculpture. The paintings of their world are now video games, with images in febrile motion; their sculptures are the latest-model cellphone, deftly shaped to the hand.

– Camille Paglia

THE FUTURE HAS NEVER BEEN so present and simultaneously uncertain. Amidst speculation of the relevance and value of traditional forms of art exists a burgeoning of entirely new forms of creative expression. Some of these are incredible socially constructed worlds that are built on a collective generations appetite for video games and instant social interaction, and within them holds some understanding about the future of art making and viewership. This is my generation and this our art form.

When I was a kid, my family didn't own a video game system and our desktop still ran DOS. My memories of early digital technologies are wrapped up in social interaction because I had to seek out others who had access to video games in order to play them. This was our Forum and Colosseum, sitting on the couch with little grey controllers, we settled petty disputes and established tangible social dynamics that followed us into real life. As I grew, these experiences became more communal, where we would work together to achieve goals and would sometimes trade off the controller in the event of a virtual death or if the timing was right.

Video games are an intrinsic part of my generation, just like television was to a previous generation. However thve art and Games critic Ian Bogost writes about an existential expansion happening in the gaming world where a “splintering” is occurring and the platforms that were once a place for “gamers” are reaching a broader audience and are no longer specifically about games. Platforms like Twitch, that allow users to stream content to community in real time, was created for people to watch each other play video games. However, you don't need to play games to participate. Twitch allows anyone to come in and participate in the community. This platform hosts a variety of social tools that allow people to interact with each other. Little subcultures, comprised of thousands of individuals, have sprung up that are related to but not defined by gaming. In the future, as these media forms evolve, we will see even more splintering of cultures until there are just platforms where people are creating and sharing content.

Images (left to right):

Ripps, Ryder. Documentation of *Alone Together*. Ryder Ripps, 2015. Web. <<http://ryder-rippls.com/alone-together-ryder-rippls.pdf>>.

Bogost, Ian (@ibogost). “Marina Abramović should have a Twitch channel.” 4 February 2015, 7:54pm. Tweet.

O'Reilly, David. *Everything Game*. Web. <<http://everything-game.com/>>

Soon ‘gamers’ will be the anomaly... Instead we'll just find people, ordinary people of all sorts. And sometimes those people will play games. And it won't be a big deal, at all.

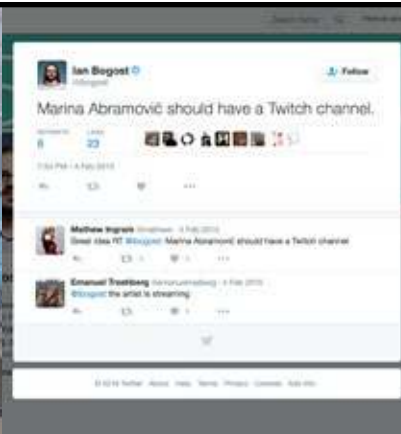
– Bogost

Looking at online media platforms like youtube, I see a broad range of personalities offering glimpses into their lives. There are VLOGs and product reviews, travel videos, and pop-cultural theories uploaded by regular people whose only claim to celebrity is an access to web-cams and an internet connection. By the numbers this kind of content matches and sometimes surpasses the presence of more commercially produced media. Back in 1998, when interviewing the very first life caster, Jenni Ringley, David Letterman said:

This will replace TV. This is all people want. People are lonely and desperate. They want to see life somewhere else taking place... this is the best idea I've heard for that silly internet thing.

Whether or not we are more or less lonely and desperate than we were in the past is debatable but the ability to feel socially connected to a personality through our devices is so appealing, it is driving most of our media consumption in one form or another. We can communicate with these virtual personalities in a limited way and they can respond to us in a manner that is rarely contrived or controlled like a traditional commercial celebrity would be. Today, it's not uncommon to feel that the people we regularly watch on Youtube or listen to on podcasts are actually our friends and many artists have taken up the idea of this lonely togetherness in their work. I am drawn to the personalities on Twitch and Youtube because I can identify with them. The incredible power of the internet we are currently experiencing is that it allows everyone to find their people.

Watching the most popular YouTube channels resemble the social dynamics of my childhood, when I used to watch people play video games and interpret the world through its virtual forms. This media form has become such an influential force that they are actively changing the kinds of games that are being made. More and more games are being created that lend themselves to being streamed and shaped by the sustained attentions of a community. Minecraft grew as a creation platform and not just a video game because of passionate online communities and YouTubers like PewdiePie and Markiplier that they congregate around. Similar games have sprung up in its wake, all providing ways for people to



imprint their own voice on the game and join their friends in becoming part of the design and creation process. Kyle Chayka reworks Joseph Beuys for the 21st century in an essay about Minecraft as art for Hyperallergic.com:

On the internet, we're all artists.

Simulator games and casual games that emphasize growth or resource production reward process and investment into collective creativity. Bogost writes about these kinds of games as being “lean back” games rather than the highly active and challenging games of the past. They produce a kind of digital zen and might be an experience that “one might boot up late at night, before bed, to wind down.” This isn’t a volatile engagement with the technology. Rather this is a deeply considered

and very human engagement with a media form. The steady rate of accomplishment in a game like Cities Skylines, it’s ASMR voice-over tickling the brain and persistent presence of the collective will be the moving artistic experiences of the future. It offers us a beautiful alternative to our hectic IRL environs and the opportunity to carefully contemplate an intricate composition of elements. The artist David O'Reilly's newest work is a brazen attempt to make a virtual system so complex and engrossing that it is literally everything. It will likely be a hit in streaming and reddit communities, where millions of people will collectively seek to plumb its depths. This is the future of art as defined by my generation. It doesn't replace painting and sculpture, but becomes something we value for vastly different and perhaps generationally specific reasons. ■

LEXICON

AAA Games. A category of games lead by big development and publishing companies. They carry large budgets and sales expectation.

AFK. An acronym meaning “Away from Keyboard”. Used to indicate that someone is going to leave their computer momentarily and would not be able to respond.

All Cinematics. A term used for videos of video games, where all the story telling elements have been distilled into an almost movie like format.

ASMR. Acronym for “Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response.” The soft voices of some online personalities have been found to create a neurological response. People experience a distinct feeling of calm and comfort while a tangible tingling sensation can be felt across the scalp and into the base of the skull.

Bot. A term used for code that automates functions normally taken by humans. Some video games have virtual opponents with artificial intelligence that compete with the player in lieu of real people to play against.

Cam-girl/boy. Colloquial term for persons broadcasting themselves over the internet as a form of adult entertainment.

Co-op. an acronym for cooperative play where players work together complete tasks and progress through the game.

Digital Distribution. A method of selling products and services online.

DOS (or MS-DOS). The term for IBM's operating system prior to the implementation of a graphical user interface (GUI)

e-sports. Term applied to video games played in professional competitive contexts. A major industry that rivals many traditional analog sports in both attendance and revenue.

FPV. Acronym for “First Person View”. These games let the player view the game through the eyes of a virtual character. The primary game mechanic comes from firing virtual projectiles at opposing characters.

Free to Play. A game that is released to the general public free of charge, but contains micro transactions that produce the revenue for the game.

IRL. Acronym for In Real Life. Used in chat scenarios when someone wants to distinguish when something is happening away from the computer.

Gamer. A label of self-identification. Those who have committed time and energy to the completion of games have used the term to assert the legitimacy of their personal investment.

Let's Play (LP). A video recording of someone playing a video game. Similar to a walkthrough but provides color commentary during the course of the play through.

Markiplier. A popular youtube personality.

Micro-transactions. A game may charge players for small advancements within the game.

Minecraft. A digital creation game that allows players to create nearly infinite combinations of Virtual forms out of digital cube shaped blocks.

Mod. Abbreviation of Moderator. Sites like Reddit are run by users and sub-reddits have user moderators to keep order.

Multiplayer. A game type that allows more than one person to actively participate in the same game world.

New Hive. Online New Media Art Platform, sharing and hosting Digital Art works from people across the globe.

NPC. Acronym for Non-player Character. This term applies to virtual entities that can be interacted with in the game world.

PewDiePie. Screen-name of Felix Kjellberg, the most popular youtube streamer. He receives hundreds of thousands of views on his videos daily.

PvE. An acronym for “Player versus Environment” used to describe game scenarios that create environmental challenges for players to overcome.

PvP. An Acronym for “Player versus Player” used to describe game scenarios that pit players against each other in competitive modes.

Reddit. An online community site where individuals share news stories and links to content.

Shmup. Abbreviation of Shoot-em Up, a category of game usually containing a primary mechanic of shooting all obstacles and/or enemy opponents.

Steam. The premier digital distribution platform for video games.

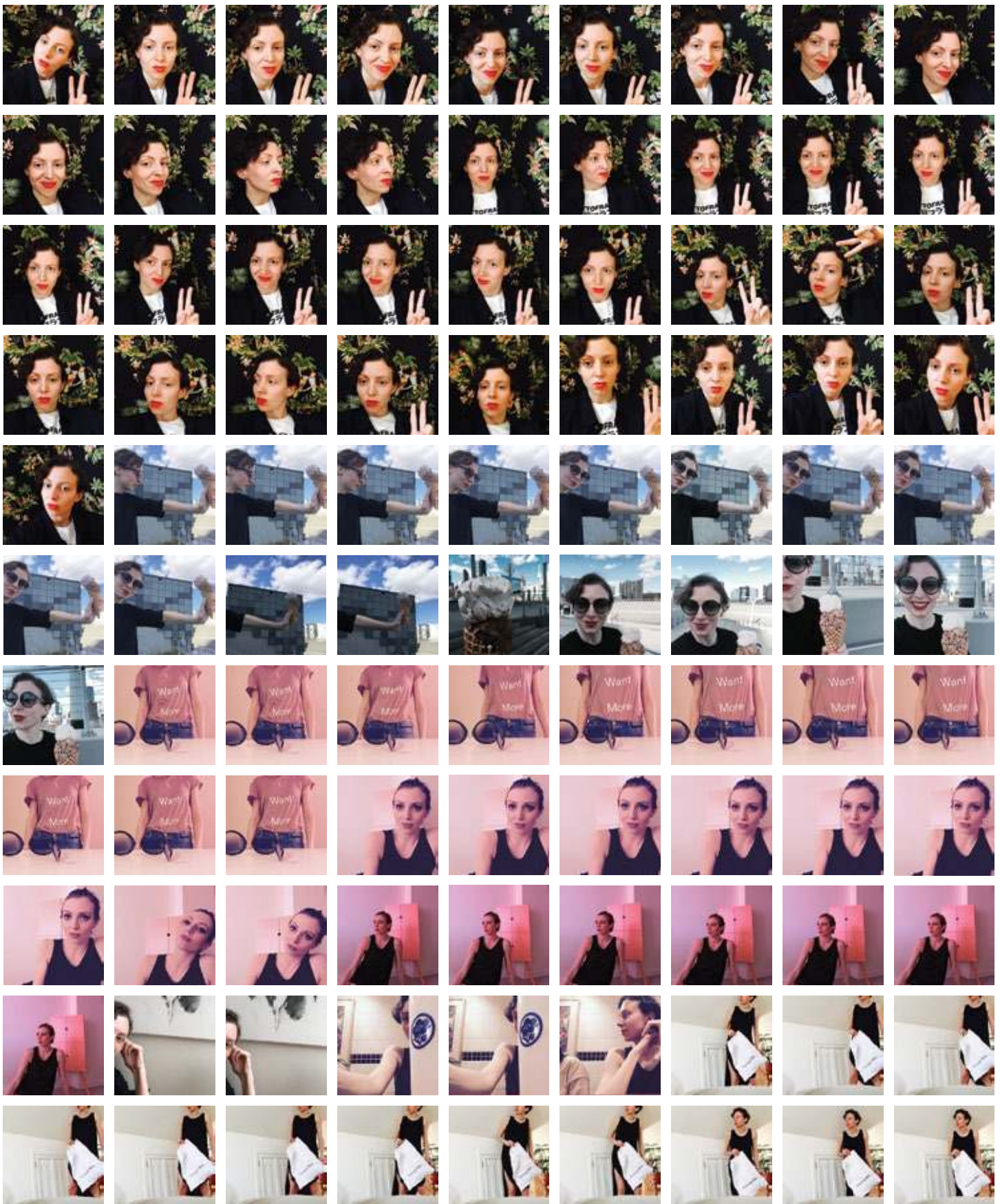
Sub. Abbreviation of Sub-reddit. User generated and moderated special interest message boards within the greater reddit ecosystem.

Twitch. A popular online media platform that allows users to stream their video broadcasts live on the internet. Primarily used for video game streams and e-sports events.

Walkthrough. A guide, chronicling all the steps necessary for completing a given video game.



VISUAL ESSAY: LEXI PENDZICH



UNPOSTED SELFIES Lexi Pendzich selfies obsessively. Out of a total of 3097 unposted selfies, this series presents some of her favourite outtakes. From posing with an ice cream cone that won't melt to her Rihanna preconcert look, these images offer a behind-the-scenes glimpse into the modern-day self portrait.

My Process

with Robin Smith-Peck

www.robinsmithpeck.com

How has your work evolved from traditional printmaking to digital print processes? Was it a natural evolution or a necessary adoption? It was both a natural evolution and a necessary adoption. As with most artists, the use of any medium, technique or tool has always been in response to a need in the studio. I'll use a potato print or learn a software program if that's what's required. Each tool or medium comes with a characteristic that colours the way it communicates. Each tool and process I use in my work is chosen because of the way it colours the content.

My initial encounters with digital grew out of circumstance. I moved to Yellowknife in 1989 and found myself without printshop facilities so in order to continue using photo-generated images in my work I made a relationship with a local commercial printer. The owner, Karen, agreed to let me play with her large colour Xerox, this allowed me to experiment with the controls for the colour and density of the Xerox print. I would then coat the manipulated Xeroxes with mat medium, soak them and remove the paper supports so that I was left with veils of transparent photographic information. I would collage and layer these photo veils with lino and woodcuts. Gradually the printing industry shifted towards digital and inkjet printing, which meant that my thermal photo transfer process no longer worked.

When I moved to Labrador in 1996 I built a studio, purchased a Praga etching press and began experimenting with a scanner, a very basic Corel paint program and an Alps MicroDry printer which was a wax/resin-transfer system using individual colored thermal ribbon cartridges. Then Alps went out of business and things changed significantly when we moved from Labrador to Fort McMurray in 2005. I was hired as the Printmaking Instructor at Keyano College and digital printmaking was part of the curriculum so I taught myself Photoshop and Epson printing.

I guess because I'm self-taught my metaphorical interface with this new medium has always been built around traditional printmaking practices. I think of each layer in Photoshop like a physical plate or block and I proof the image by shifting blending modes, adding masks, and altering the sequence. Sometimes I think of shifting the colors in an image by imagining it like a viscosity print wherein each level of the plate carries a different colour. I often save an individual layer as though I'm storing a stencil or plate to use in future images. In this way I continue to build a lexicon of digital marks, shapes and forms that have become part of my visual vocabulary.

In regards to teaching digital processing: can you speak about teaching newer generations that are so accustomed to digital tools? Teaching art in any medium that people are accustomed to whether it's a pencil, a camera, or a computer is about shifting from passive viewing to active looking. Two dimensional image making is about learning the formal visual language of a medium to explore and express conceptual interests.

The main difference I've found when teaching with digital tools is that the speed of each action makes it difficult for students to engage in prolonged perception so they miss moments of insight and discovery. It is less about teaching the various tools (though that's really important) and more about helping them to engage in active looking.

Some of the techniques I use are designed specifically to slow them down. For example, initially they are not allowed to use keystroke shortcuts or I might randomly call out to 'push back from the screen' so that they will look at what they're doing in the same way you might step back from an easel. I have them proof early on so that they have a better sense of the actual scale. I encourage them to use the mouse when drawing so that they can surprise themselves with the beauty of the awkward or unfamiliar. At Keyano I was able to develop a curriculum focused specifically on print, the lab layout made for a very invigorating and collaborative environment. Photoshop is a giant program and no one person can be expected to master it in 4 months...but in that open Lab/Studio environment the students were able to do what they do naturally with digital culture...share. That's important.

What traditional or analogue techniques do you use to create artwork? How is this more effective than creating such an effect digitally? Digital tools offer no physical resistance. When you use an etching needle, or a litho crayon or a gouge the resulting mark is created by the contact of the tool with the physical world guided by your hand. That's reconciled resistance. So often I engage in practices to find those marks that clarify an image for me. For instance, I have been playing around with the idea of gameboards for several years now...trying to figure out what they mean to me. I began with a simple digital checkerboard pattern...too crisp, too clean, the edges of the squares meant that spatially they could only really move in abrupt forward and backward shifts. So I retrieved a pile of old shina plywood squares that I had from another project and freehand cut grids into them and then rolled them up and assembled them into game boards and printed them by hand. The results were wonderfully imperfect, the space glided and drifted. As I was printing them I crawled up on the table to photograph the inked blocks because they were so beautiful. Sometimes I had to cut certain edges to get a cleaner printing edge...the resulting wood chips spread across the boards and reminded me of electronic signals...so I photographed them and then I gathered the inked chips and began scattering them over the scanner creating gestures of signals. These digital files became source material for the prints in the exhibition "Image and the Curious Mind" and I'm still working on the relief printed gameboards. I guess what I'm saying is that I will engage in whatever practice I need to in order to surprise myself and discover some new aspect of the form that I hadn't seen before.

Unfortunately, the phrase 'traditional' is often defined by the accepted techniques used to build the matrix, which is problematic because our medium is constantly responding to changes in the commercial print industry. When I was a young printmaker there were shows that would not accept any print that incorporated photographic techniques because photo was not considered part of the traditional print language. As a printmaker I tend to 'see' the world through the lens of printed marks so when I am

creating in the digital world I create marks and surfaces that speak through that lens. After all, the printed image is an inked illusion recorded from a matrix. How that matrix is made is important only to the artist. It is only the artist that is engaged in the intricacies of that dialogue. The viewer is responding to the recording not the matrix.

Terminology in creative processing programs such as Photoshop are derived from traditional printmaking processes; how do you feel that link in processes helps create an understanding of each process and the possibilities of incorporating aspects from digital and traditional processes? Well the similarity of language certainly helped me when I was learning the program! But I think what helped more was the printmaking sensibility of layering where the artist builds an image by printing from multiple plates, stones, screens etc. You know that you've crossed into that sensibility when you start mentally taking apart an existing printed image to understand it better or when you begin mentally choreographing the results of various printing sequences. Photoshop works for printmakers in large part because of its layer feature. It is not foreign to us to create an entire matrix just to print a small blend in an area of an image. We will proof again and again to find the right transition between the colours, or the right texture or the right transparency. We will sit and stare at the proofs analyzing where the blend sits spatially and how it affects the reading of the image. Only once we have explored the possibilities will we proceed to print the final image. This is a printmaking sensibility and in Photoshop it is the ability to instantly shift the colour, location and sequence of each layer/matrix that allows the artist to accelerate the proofing process. It is also the speed of this proofing that can bring on a state of passive viewing. It takes great concentration and focus to maintain a state of active viewing.

How has digital culture affected the way you approach your artwork? I am really a child of 'analogue culture' whereby my formative perceptions of the world emerged through printed material and early television. My Dad was a technician with CBC Northern Services so I understood the world of communications as built by the architecture of low frequency microwave dishes and towers where invisible electronic signals were captured and translated into sound and image. For me, digital culture is primarily content made accessible on a massive scale at an accelerated speed. How I parlay that available content into knowledge that will inform or guide my work is still a process of trial and error, exploration, and active looking.

How do you describe and feel about your work, which hasn't been printed yet and only exists in a digital realm? Do you still consider it print art, or is it something else? I see my unprinted digital images the same way as I see an unprinted block or stone...as a matrix, a potential. As all printmakers know, we occasionally fall in love with our matrix and can be initially disappointed by the first proofs. For me, I find that transition from constructed matrix to fully realized physical print endlessly challenging and endlessly satisfying. Bringing anything into the physical world requires us to confront our limitations and compromise with the demands of materials to arrive at an acceptable and often wondrous result. ■



From top to bottom, left to right:

The Mixing Chamber, digital medium, archival ink, rag paper, beeswax and resin on cradled panel 24" x 24" 2015

True Lengths Gesso, digital ground and archival ink on Arches 88 42" x 58" 2014

Radiating Passages of the Domed and Doubled, Gesso, digital medium, archival ink on Somerset Rag Paper 24" x 39" 2013

A Reservoir (for days like this), digital medium, archival ink, rag paper, beeswax and resin on cradled panel 40" x 60" 2015

Nearing the Tank Farm, Gesso, Digital Ground and Archival Ink on Arches 88. 42" x 58" 2014

Translations and Reversals Coding a Woodcut:

THE WORK OF BETH HOWE & CLIVE MCCARTHY

by April Dean

BETH HOWE AND CLIVE MCCARTHY are artists and collaborators whose work together pursues the possibilities that come from fusing algorithms and machine tooling with relief printing. Together they are bridging the creative work of coding with visual art practices to explore the questions: “Can we make code ‘material’?” and “What does the process used mean to the image that is made?”

Using a CNC router as their tool of translation, Howe and McCarthy have developed code that prepares photographic images to be cut into relief surfaces. Their imagery is monumental yet commonplace, featuring bridges, overpasses, boulders and warehouses. Printed at a large scale, their work moves between abstract marks at close range and photographic images from a distance.

Their way of working opens up an interesting realm of questions about process, about reproducibility and about the abundant relevance of the printed multiple in a digital age. During a panel presentation at SGCI: Flux titled “The Same But Different, or How Not to Auto-Tune Your Prints,” Beth Howe presented this collaborative research to a very receptive and engaged audience. A fellow Canadian printmaker asked the — somewhat obvious, yet important — question: “why make prints?” I think the impetus being the code or algorithm has conceptually or quite literally become the matrix and the relief surface the impression. The code is where the artists “hand” or rather instinct / process / decision-making takes place and the CNC cut block becomes the impression from that code or matrix. The block is, no doubt, highly reproducible as it is possible to make multiple, almost identical or editionable impressions.

The print itself is a reversal and a translation of our contemporary moment by transforming the digital into the tangible. It closes the loop from photograph to interpretation through algorithm — and many more technical and complex steps interfacing with code and software and machine — to ink on paper. It reveals its robotic origin story through the almost perfect, machine like gestures, yet the printed image, as a final communication is a perfect equalizer. The printed image reveals the full story of the interpretation of a foreign language (code) and delivers that interpretation in the medium we are still best trained to read.



Top: *Ok Do Over (detail)*, 2014, artist book printed from failed plates originally cut for the large wall works. Edition of 10 + 1 AP.
Bottom: *Putah Creek Rocks #3*, 2016, 24"x39", Relief print on Sekishu. Edition of 4.

In their project statement Howe and McCarthy write:

In the process of making — coding, cutting, printing, recoding, recutting, reprinting — we watch how translation generates noise. A seamless transfer from one language to another, one file type to another, is unusual. What happens when an image is passed through a string of languages like a game of telephone? From the eye surveying a scene, to the digital capture of a camera, to processing that captured image through a unique algorithm, to translating that outcome into the line-code of a milling machine, to rolling up the resulting cut block with ink and finally bringing the image into the realm of printed matter, there are many opportunities for mutation. The image is rearranged, degraded, transformed, and along the way there is noise, glitches, artifacts, and scrambled outcomes.

The failures of translation create new possibilities though they rupture a perceived sanctity of the image: moirés, fouled plates, overprints, bad code, an unbelievable amount of sawdust gumming up the works, and a beautiful wobbly line that was not in the code, but perhaps was a ghost in the machine." ■

www.beth-howe.com/prints/
www.fourteenthstreetstudio.com/index.html

2016 Summer Classes at SNAP



Image credit: Caitlin Bodewitz

Mixed Media Printmaking: Photo Transfers & Screen Printing

Tues., Aug. 16 & Thur., Aug. 18, 5:30-10pm

2 classes

Caitlin Bodewitz

\$158 / \$144 for SNAP members

Explore mixed media methods and create a series of unique wood panel prints that incorporate photo transfer techniques with silkscreen printing. Caitlin Bodewitz will teach you her tips and tricks for achieving flawless photo transfers and how to integrate layers of designs and imagery with colourful screen inks.

Hand-dyed Papers

Tues., July 5, 6-10pm at Devonian Botanical Gardens, and follow-up on Sat., July 9 & Sun., July 10, 12-6pm at SNAP Printshop

3 Classes

Justine Jenkins-Crumb & Marc Siegner

\$288 / \$259 for SNAP members

Devonian Botanical Gardens and SNAP are cross-pollinating to offer you this unique summer class where you will learn how to hand-dye your own printmaking papers! On Tuesday, July 5 at Devonian Botanical Gardens enjoy a special evening tour from Botanist, Justine Jenkins-Crumb where you will collect materials from the herb and dye plant gardens to use for creating dip and contact dyes. During the weekend of July 9 & 10 at SNAP with Printmaker Marc Siegner, dye a variety of Japanese rice papers to use to print your plates and images on. Participants are required to have introductory experience in Relief or Intaglio processes.

REGISTER online, by phone or in person at the gallery during office hours.

For more information visit snapartists.com/education or give us a call at 780.423.1492.

All classes take place in our printshop located just around the corner from the gallery:
12056 Jasper Ave. (with the exception of the first day of the Hand-dyed Papers workshop.)



Sunny Alberta Prints

Sat., July 16, 12-5pm

Patrick Arès-Pilon

\$110 / \$100 for SNAP members

Enjoy the sunshine and the beautiful outdoors while you try one of the earliest photography processes and create a suite of Cyanotype Sun prints. Experiment using photogram techniques, found objects, dried flora and natural light to expose the cyan-blue chemically sensitized photo paper to create intriguing one-of-a-kind prints.

PrintMatters Pronto Plate Printing

Sat., Aug. 6 & Sun., Aug. 7

1 Weekend

Katherine Rhodes Fields & Cathie Kayser

Contact SNAP for details

Talented Artists, Katherine Rhodes Fields and Cathie Kayser from the Houston-based non-profit printmaking organization PrintMatters will be instructing a special workshop using Pronto Plates on Saturday, August 6th and Sunday, August 7th! They will be demonstrating hands-on techniques using polyester lithography plates for you to learn how to create your own plates and print the images! More information and details are to come, make sure to register for this one-time only weekend workshop!



Community Events

Artist in Residence Panel

Tuesday, June 21

6:30-8:30pm

Hear first hand experiences from local artists who have recently attended Artist Residency programs at Atelier Graff, The Banff Centre, Kala Art Institute and at SNAP. Holly de Moissac, Dara Humniski, Joanne Madeley, Morgan Melenka and Marie Winters will present their residency experiences, discuss application processes, share insider information about facilities and show the work they created during their residency. Be sure to attend the panel to get informed of the many Artist in Residence programs available and to have your questions answered!



Put a Bird On It: Screen Print Drop-in Event

Thursday, July 14, 12-7pm

Suggested donation of \$10

Inspired by the infamous Portlandia skit and our incessant DIY need to put birds on EVERYTHING, SNAP invites you to drop in to our Printshop and literally Put A Bird On It! Bring any flat printable items to be screen printed on and adorned with birds of all sizes, types and full of feathers. You can bring existing drawings, posters or prints, fabric, clothing, tote bags, anything flat and in need of a Bird On It for this event! Fabric items such as tote bags, pillowcases, tea towels and t-shirts will be available for purchase.

Bring your plates, stencils, paper and inks as well as your ideas and creativity for a day of printing at SNAP!

Please RSVP a day in advance if you require a \$10 coated screen rental.

SATURDAY SESSIONS: 12-5 pm
\$20 (plus supply fees)

June 11 & 25
July 23
August 13

snapartists.com/shop-and-studio

BAD ADVICE FOR ARTISTS

by Adam Waldron-Blain | adam.instituteparachute.ca

One of the best things about working at a gallery are all of the great emails I get. I manage a couple of our public-facing accounts, and both of them have been subscribed to all kinds of lists, sometimes redundantly. So it is my pleasure to receive two copies of the weekly messages from the arts council and a couple of other centres. But also: when a local festival changes its name and mission and starts aggressively pushing its passes every week, I am suddenly not sure if I want them or not.

It's actually pretty neat that email newsletters seem like they are a thing again. There was a brief moment when it seemed like the whole idea might be in trouble—when we nerds still used the words “web 2.0” regularly, a lot of the big players were talking about products that were like email but better in some specific way that was appealing for other executives, explicitly claiming that they could replace it. Also they were in the browser and awful to use. Now it's different—social companies moving into messaging now seem to be interested in personal messages because that's where they can get free labour to build their ad databases. The ugly plays with better-than-email products are all shuttered and the heirs to the kind of intra-organizational communication they were trying to make happen use a different approach.

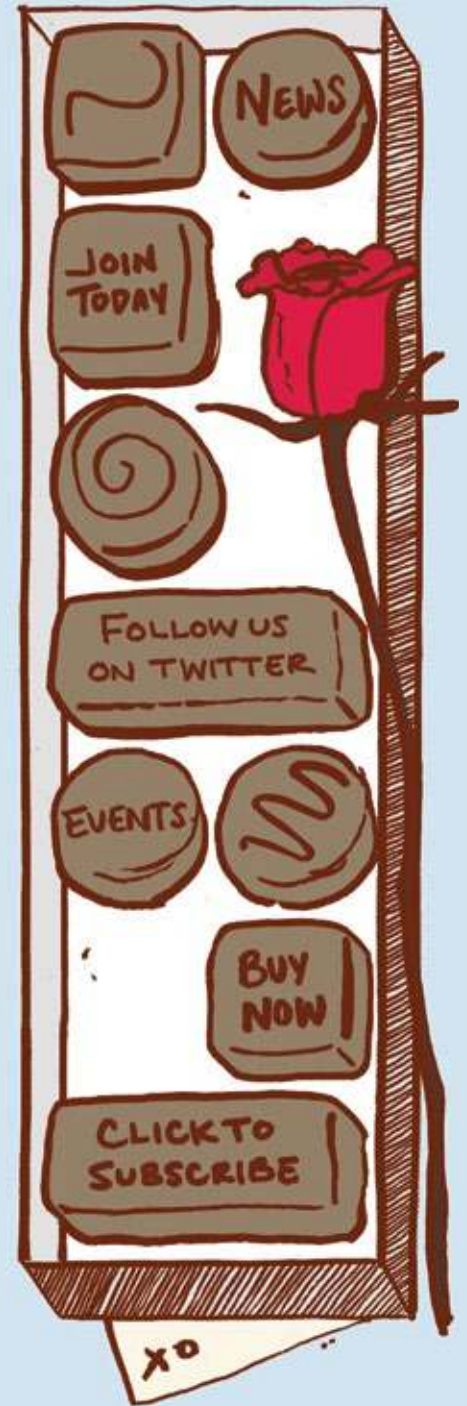
The important thing is that everyone cool has a Tinyletter or Patreon newsletter or at least an automated Wordpress digest email from their blog and you should have one too. Most of us don't have time to write a short creative non-fiction piece or poetical musings every week, or have real compelling events and shows in various cities to direct our peers' attention to, but the good news

is that you can just put in some updates about every little thing going on in your career and the things you made. It will be a great tool to convince yourself that you are busy and successful, and probably get more subscribers than that time you tried to start a podcast (because it's easier to ignore).

The true blossoming of the artist's email newsletter, though, is when it makes the reverse move to those tech companies' 2000s-era missteps: when the email newsletter can actually replace all other aspects of communication.

It's pretty common in a stack of submissions to find a few with the wrong institution's name somewhere inside. It's funny, but with an understanding that yes, we all probably send out packages to a list of places at once—although sometimes it's a little revealing of how considered, or not, an artist's sense of audience is. But the best email newsletters are the ones that go one step further than even this, and replace the submission process entirely. Just an email in a standard format with appropriately conservative-but-fun post-word-processor decorations, announcing the intention to create some installation, without much detail or any images really. Maybe with a kind of a CV presented as a list of links all inserted with the mailout software's sharing tools, to links on a website. The pinnacle of the form.

Whatever you do, keep publishing forever. My saddest email times lately are when I realize that a newsletter has come to an end, happiest when one picks up after a long absence, even for a single post. A moment of intimacy with someone's words, something that might make this column feel cheap.



Adam Waldron-Blain is a famous artist in Edmonton. Last year his works have appeared in shows at Confederation Centre Art Gallery and the Art Gallery of Alberta, as well as various performances and internet objects. His practice is mostly based on telling people what to think. He works as program coordinator at Latitude 53.

SNAP Member News

Congratulations to **April Dean**, SNAP's Executive Director, who deservedly was awarded the Syncrude Excellence in Arts Management Award at this year's Mayors Celebration of the Arts.

Sara Norquay is currently exhibiting at the Craft Council in #ABCCraft, a group exhibition looking at how digital technology is enhancing or impacting fine craft artists in Alberta.

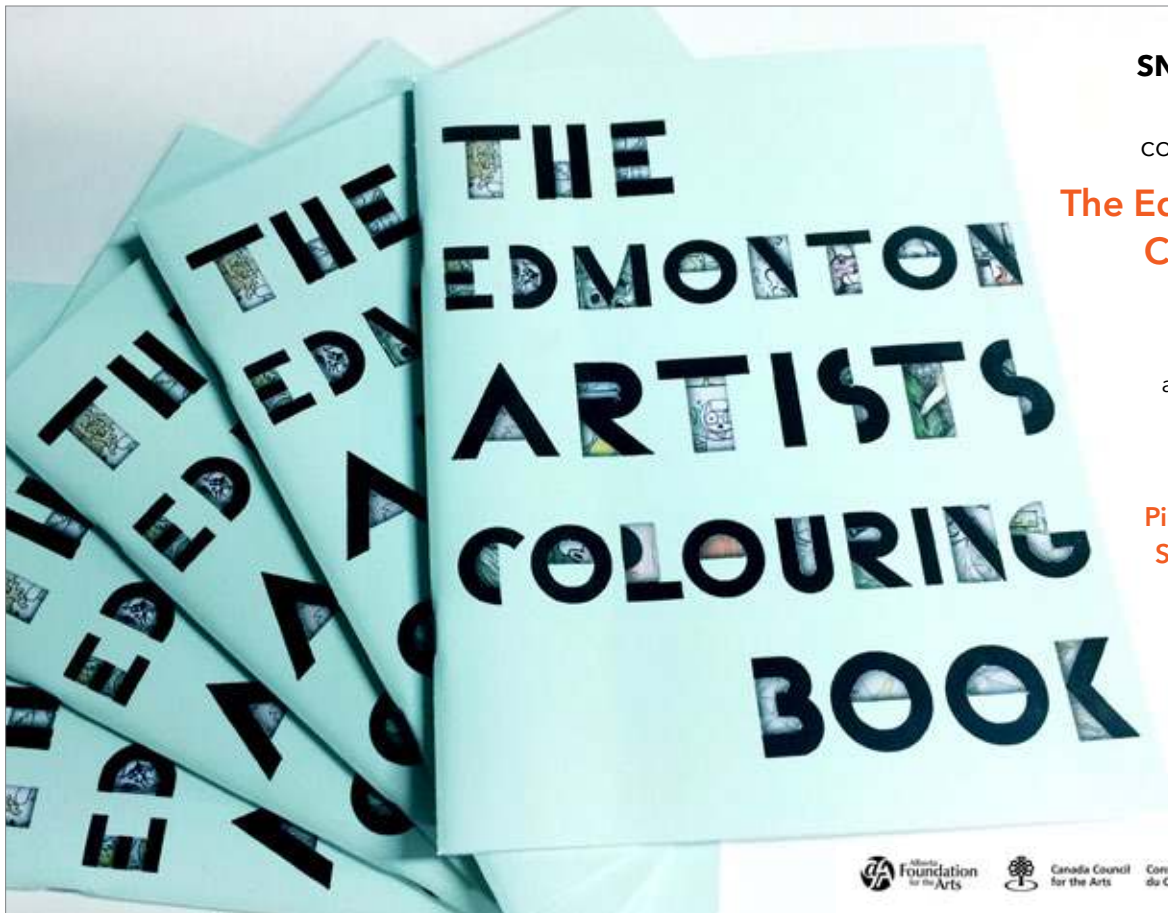
Gerry Dotto is exhibiting *Flow of Traffic Theory* at the Art Gallery of St. Albert from June 2 – July 2. This photography exhibition deals primarily with 'object of the road' - road signs, license plates etc. with messages that have been obscured or distorted in some way. The value of these signs, relative to the message they once carried, has been lost. They now take on an aesthetic value based on their location, or their appearance or the reinterpretation of their message.

Opening Reception is June 2 from 6–9pm.

Sean Caulfield is exhibiting *The Flood*, a massive woodcut relief spanning the entire wall of Manning Hall at the Art Gallery of Alberta. See the panel mural on display until August 14, 2016.

SNAP Members **Gerry Dotto & Taryn Kneteman**, have been selected to participate in the 10th Alberta Biennial of Contemporary Art at the Art Gallery of Alberta and the Walter Phillips Gallery in the summer/fall of 2017.

We'd like to share our members' news with our readership and help spread the word about upcoming exhibitions, workshops, art sales, etc. Please send in your news to communications@snapartists.com



SNAP & Latitude 53 have launched a collaborative project

The Edmonton Artist Colouring Book

23 colouring pages created by Edmonton artists, all funds directly supporting both Artist-run centres

Pick yours up today at SNAP or Latitude 53!

Sponsor Membership

4 Limited Edition Prints. \$150. Supporting the production of art & writing in Edmonton. SIGN ME UP!

We want to let you in on the best art deal in town. SNAP has been commissioning the creation of new works by print artists for over 25 years. Becoming a SNAP Member at the Sponsor Level currently costs **\$150** annually & our Sponsor Members receive **4 limited edition fine art prints** in the mail and a printed version of our beautifully designed quarterly newsletter, *SNAPLine*.

By supporting SNAP through Sponsor Membership you are ensuring that we can carry out our long-standing commitment to promote and preserve the fine art of printmaking through courses, lectures, workshops and exhibitions. I invite you to become part of this unique program, you can enroll in person at our gallery or online through our website www.snapartists.com.

Membership Levels

Sponsor: \$150

*receives 4 newsletter prints a year

Individual: \$40

Student/Senior: \$20

Membership Benefits

20% off at Colours Artist Supplies

15% off at the Big Pixel Inc

10% off at the Paint Spot

10% off at Delta Art & Drafting

** Check snapartists.com for monthly member perks at various Edmonton retailers*

Call for Writers & Artists

SNAP welcomes submissions from local writers and artists to contribute to *SNAPLine*, the organization's quarterly publication. *SNAPLine* is a collective publication created by a committee of members from the Society of Northern Alberta Print-Artists (SNAP) and Edmonton's arts community. The publication is a unique perspective on not only printmaking in Edmonton and around the world, but it also explores other dimensions of contemporary visual art. Each issue includes not only organizational news and the work of print-artists, but also feature articles that are engaging, critical and creative.

Upcoming issue themes include:

Performance Edition

Kyoto Edition

Themes should be considered upon submitting. Prior to writing, please provide a statement of interest, outlining the proposed article (~200 words), along with two samples of previous writing to: communications@snapartists.com

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SNAP - Society of Northern
Alberta Print-Artists

Interested in writing for *SNAPLine*?

Contact us at snap@snapartists.com



www.snapartists.com
10123-121 Street, Edmonton, AB