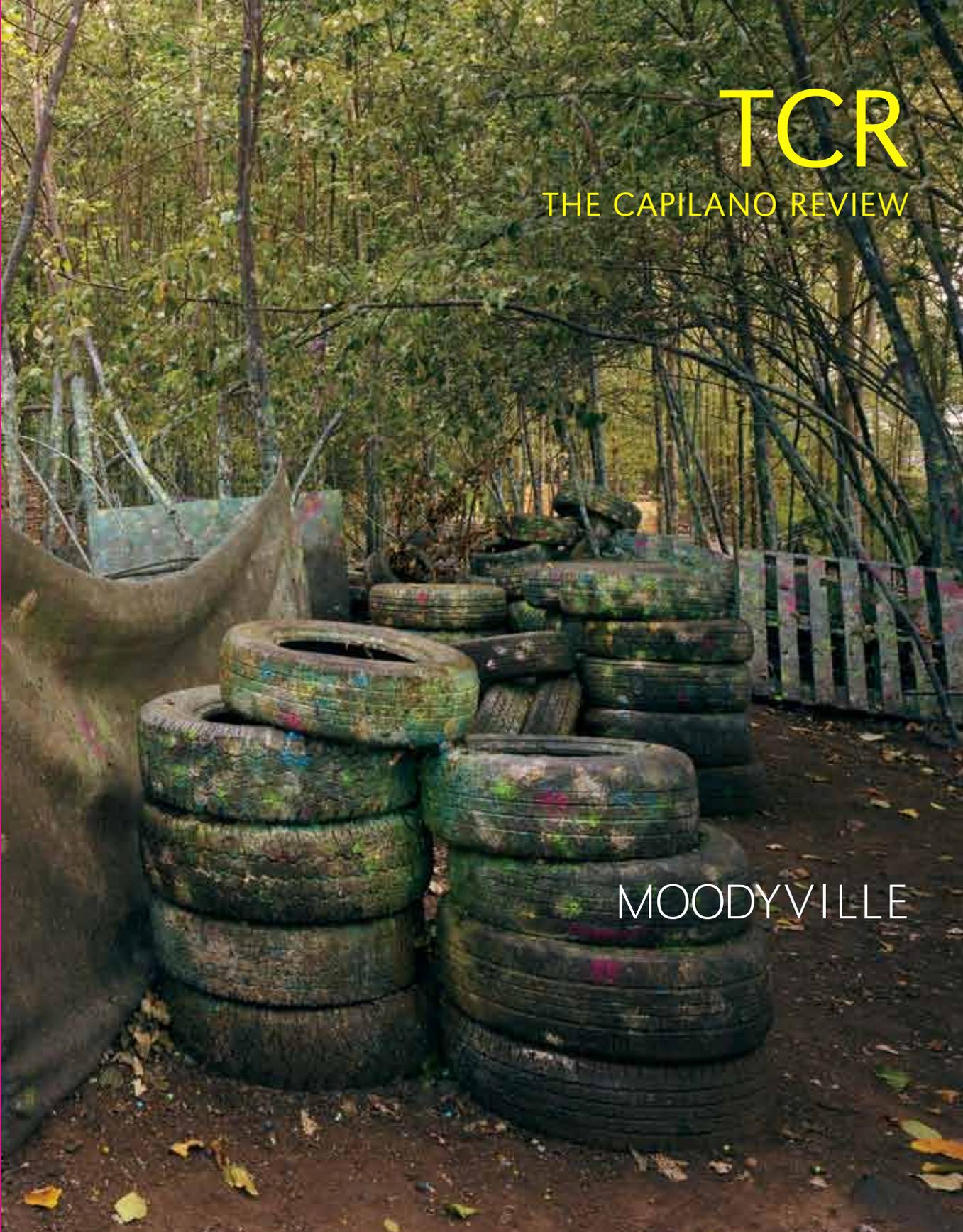


# TCR

THE CAPILANO REVIEW

MOODYVILLE



We live in a shack on the sea. Dollarton is an old shipbuilding town, Dollar liners—now dead: slipways covered with brambles, enormous blasted oaks in a fine deep forest. Outside the window, a vast white calm where sea is confused with sky, and the Rockies. We have a boat: and one day, out for a row, a whale came up beside us! I think it was Herman Melville in disguise. Anyhow it is a weird and wonderful place and we love it . . . .

*Malcolm Lowry*

*6 September 1940*

The “Moodyville” issue of *The Capilano Review* is dedicated to the late Nancy Shaw—North Vancouver resident, poet, artist, curator, scholar, critic, and collaborator extraordinaire.

# MOODYVILLE

The Capilano Review / Presentation House Gallery

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## PETER CULLEY / Five North Vancouver Trees

for Lary Bremner

*Here and there between the pages a skeleton leaf conjured up those lost woods*

Patrick Leigh Fermor



1.

The phylogeny of sleep  
vs. the ontogeny of waking up  
bunnybeard blankets  
dewdrop the sleeping slutswool  
drooled voices skitter  
from the back of a tent (circus)  
useless user fingers pinch  
filched bodega grapes  
awake in sheets so soft  
you devour them in a dream  
goosefeathers knuckle  
a wet November no-hitter's  
bloody stucco,  
horseradish breezes  
curl brown paint from gray lumber  
in soft curls—  
an August half-moon  
teething at sixes & sevens,  
in sheets so soft they squeezed  
phantom pain out of real pain,  
excuses thumbed a map's wet fold,  
a ghost train fringe marked with  
misty rivers, chenille fingers, flutter gulches,  
cross-digging legends out of anthracite  
shaded parks bunted for cornerboys  
that flap & tumble & shamble.

2.

All is Loch Elsewhere,  
Arcadian pancake & parkade,  
chewed venue, through potash  
& slough  
eelgrass aftertaste  
past castle & ledge  
where the blue bus humps  
up & left, past the twinkling figurines  
of a presumptive distance  
even darker closer in & up, thickened so with  
baronial fences & colonial hedges that  
only from overhead can  
the security corona be glimpsed  
when cat-like you trip its cricket senses.



3.

All is Cantaloupe Causeway  
a shrubbery of near attainments  
half-rendered blossoms  
a spider's tincture grown over  
a monkey puzzle half-hardened with honey—  
lichen overhangs the wavy cavy air  
dream-flies sip hat-salt & eye-salt & sea-salt,  
& in the inky truffle shade of a giant oak  
plotters tip cordials, toast  
*Lost Illusions*, lost dogs, lost wages—  
a bubble is a mighty fine thing!  
For about three months & change  
the tulip was worth more  
than the picture of the tulip!  
& that tapioca backwash  
wreathed in strawberry quik  
was like childhood in reverse,  
open to the nourishment but still  
popping the air's envelope,  
brakeless on a banana cruiser.



4.

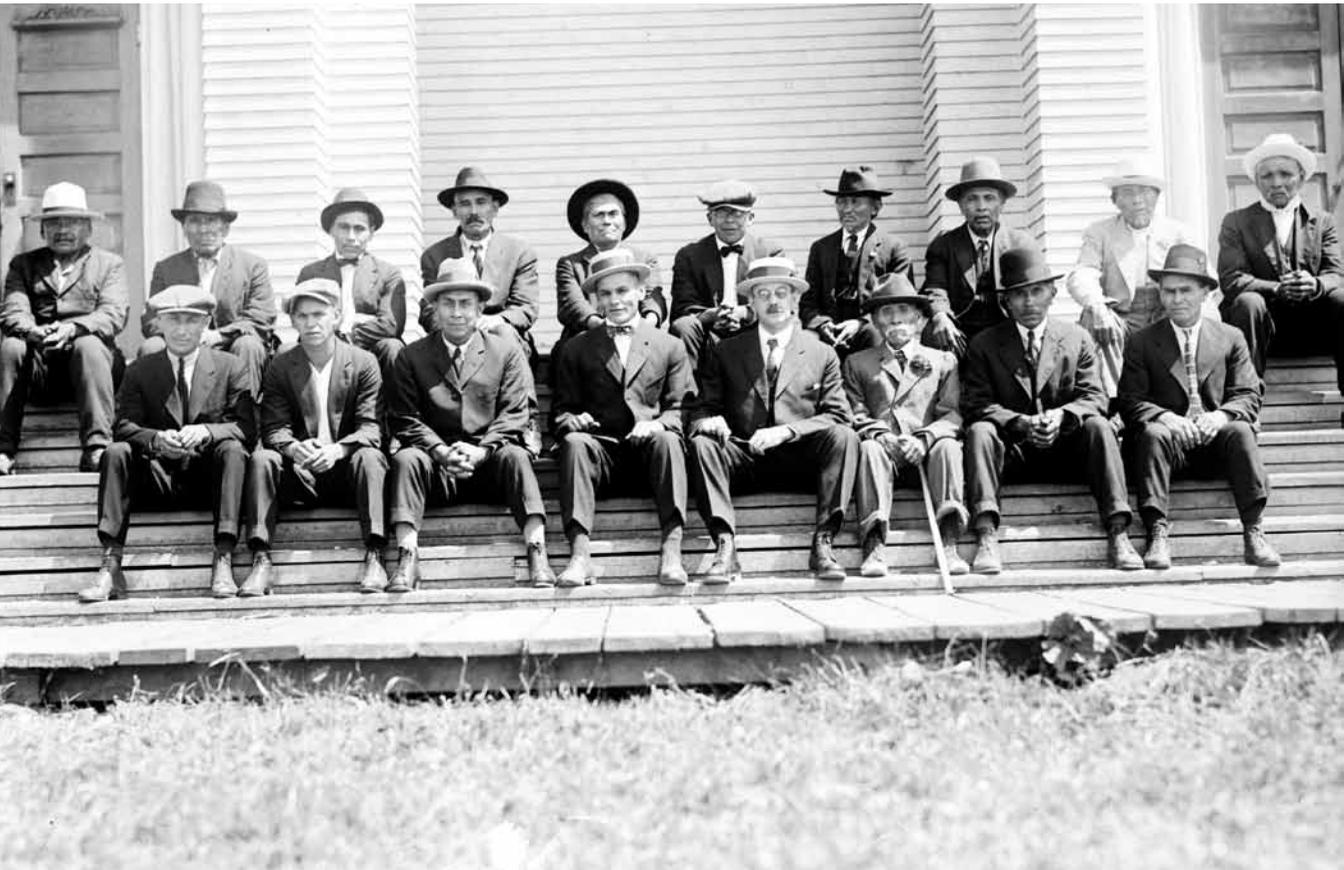
The state couldn't catch a fucking cold  
too cheap to keep the flow of piping hot  
up just ask the bus stations  
& movie theaters—  
no fresh towels for popcorn paws  
& foam alone won't disinfect  
the coughed-on loonies & toonies  
they insist into our minty mitts—  
thus later asleep, eucalyptus drop  
half-lodged, I missed it  
when Matrix dropped his  
crystal set into the toilet tank  
& so soap-bombed the fountain  
that the concrete salmon  
crested foam all over downtown  
scales glinting off the white pebbles  
in the giant bowl of the casino's  
outdoor loser ashtray.



5.

In sleep so thick  
the panels of the trucks  
pivot through the birds & bricks  
that flap above the viaducts  
on downs as soft as poplar fluff  
graders scrape off mossy stuff  
revealing projects never needed,  
zombie gardens never weeded  
& a ragged couch's burning fleece  
prompts no visit from police—  
a hermaphroditic order  
in the standing water  
a kind of turbid flux  
flaps above the viaducts.





*Squamish Leadership Commemorating Amalgamation, St Paul's Church, North Vancouver, 1923.*

Back Row, From L-R: Harry Discon, [Chief Andrew?], [Moses Joseph?], Chief Billy, Chief Jimmy Jimmy, Edward Williams, Chief Charlie, [Ned Joseph?], Julian. Front Row, From L-R: [Frank Baker?], [Alfred George?], Chief Mathias Joe, Andy Paull, a Department of Indian Affairs official, Chief Tom, Chief George, Willie Baker. Vancouver Public Library, Special Collections, [21789]

## **SXÁALTXW-T SIYÁM, CHIEF LOUIS MIRANDA /** **An Excerpt from Moodyville, 1969-76**

For some years before 1892, there was a settlement east of North Vancouver that was known as Moodyville. It was built around a lumber mill that employed a large number of men of different races. By the mill there was a big house known as the cook-house and that is where the men had three meals a day: breakfast, lunch and supper. There was also a big company general store where you could purchase all the hardware you needed—all the groceries and clothing—and any kind of patent medicines, too. There was also a hotel where you could get all the alcohol beverages as well. Sailing vessels from different countries used to come to this port for lumber.

It was also a small port, a landing where sailing vessels from different countries used to come for lumber. As I've mentioned people of all differing nationalities were here. English people from the "old country" and Moodyville received its name from its owner known as Colonel Moody, a gentleman from the old country, who owned and operated the mill. There were people from Hawaii, known as Kanakas and where they built their homes was called Kanaka Road. There were a few French people who built on the hillside above Kanaka Road. It was referred to as "Frenchtown." And there were Chileans from South America referred to as "Chilaenas."

And so on August 12th in the year 1892 a little baby boy was born to a Squamish native woman, Cecelia, and to a man from Chile, South America, his name was Francisco (Frank) Miranda. He was baptized Logasta Miranda and later called Louis Miranda. How long my parents lived at Moodyville after I was born I do not know. When I did start to realize things, we were living in North Vancouver in a house built on piles. There were about eight houses built in this manner. On the waterfront and when the tide was high we could hear the water splashing under our house. The houses were located south and a little east of where the Hollyburn lumberyard is located today. The creek that flows on the east of the lumber yard used to flow under our house and that was where all the families got their water.

It was just a dream to me when my mother used to load me into a canoe, and with the help of my stepbrother (who was the son of a full-blooded Squamish

man to whom my mother was legally married but were parted) they would paddle to Moodyville, and there meet my father and load the canoe with enough groceries to do us for the month . . . .

I was living with my mother's cousin, Mrs. Susan Flores, and from there I went to live with the Parkers, whom were both Hawaiians, and they had one full-grown son, a grown daughter, and three younger boys, the youngest was just a little younger than I was. It was then I started to go to school at Moodyville, it was then I really seen Moodyville for what it really was.

The Mill was built on piles, and on the south side of the mill and for quite some distance to the east there was a long dock, also built on piles. The dock was long enough to accommodate up to four sailing vessels (known as wind jammers) at once, which came to this Port for lumber that was to be shipped to other countries. These sailing vessels were towed in by tug boats, and when they were loaded they were towed out of the harbour. How far they were towed I wouldn't know.

There were a few of the Native men from the Mission Reserve that were working in the Mill, but most of them worked as stevedores loading the ships. And it was said that it's hard to beat them at that work. And when the lots were open for sale at North Vancouver, my dad bought two lots on First Street between Lonsdale Avenue and Chesterfield, immediately back of where the Hollyburn lumber yard is located today. I do not remember correctly whether or not my Dad paid twenty-five dollars for two lots, or twenty dollars a lot, anyway we had two lots. My Dad was working at the Mill in Moodyville. He worked ten hours a day, six days a week. So the only times that I was with my dad were in the evenings and on Sunday all day . . . .

[My] dad got married, the woman he married was much younger then he was. Her father's name was Louie Smith (a German) and her mother was part Hawaiian, her maiden name Lucy Nahanee. As I have already mentioned, we were living on First Street, and I was a very happy boy as I had the most wonderful father and my stepmother was a loving person to me, she was every bit any mother could be to her own son . . . .

So it happened one Sunday while I was playing around the front of the house, I heard the church bell ring down on the Indian Mission Reserve. And it just happened I looked up and I seen my dad remove his hat and bless his self,

I never thought anything of it. On the following Sunday I was busy as usual playing in the mud, then I noticed that my dad brought out a chair and sat down and it was not long then I heard the church bell ring, and immediately I looked up and again I seen my dad remove his hat and make the sign of the cross. So I just remained still, and when I seen my dad bless his self again and put on his hat. I went to him and crawled up on his lap, and looking up at him I asked, "What was that dad?" Then he looked at me and said, "Son, those bells were to remind every Catholic to say the prayers know as the Angelus. Every noon in my country when you heard those bells, regardless of where you were, or what you were doing, you would stop, bless yourself and say the prayer know as the Angelus which is very sacred to the Catholic people."

. . . I was eleven years old when my dear stepmother gave birth to her first son, and he was baptized at the St. Paul's Indian Church. He was known to me as Francisco and changed to Francis. Then my dad was troubled with his heart, he was unable to go out and do any more hard work. So one day he said to me, "Son. your real mother is still alive, and she is living up Squamish. They came down to the great Northern Fish Cannery to work during the fishing season which was for about six weeks in the month of July and August. If you would like to meet your real mother, I could ask her to come up here."

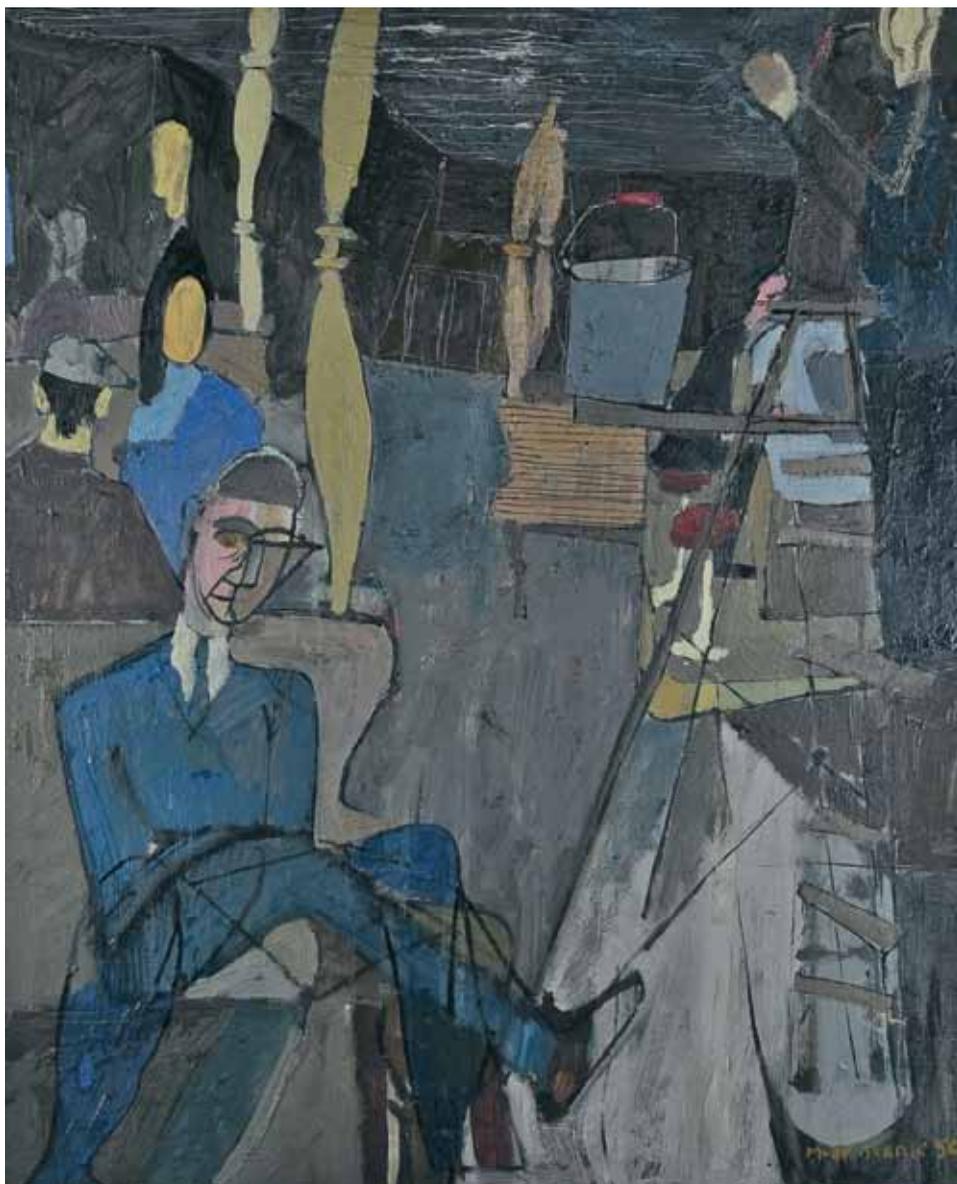
. . . So one day came when my dad asked me if I would like to go up to Squamish and stay with my mother for a month or two or come home sooner if I got lonesome . . . . It seemed that I was going into a new world; I was leaving my dad and dear ones, all my playmates and relatives. My mother gave me the understanding I would not hear English spoken unless my stepbrother got home which was not often.

. . . We started for Squamish, there was a little wind blowing so my step father put the sail and we were rounding the lighthouse at Point Atkinson, the wind blew a little harder and kept up a nice breeze, so after sailing about eight hours we landed up at Squamish.

. . . I went to Squamish in the month of August in the year of 1905.







## DAPHNE MARLATT / from *The Given*

to feel at home in just that particular light before haze moves in—moments only—brightens Spode blue shoulder of Grouse. against their steady presence the restless filigree of leafless birch. waver, tremble. still getting used to this particular sense of history as missed story, shadowing place.

.

and then I'm there: halfway up Grouse Mountain on that block, rainy firs dripping staccato time on a peak roof. black steel trunks on bricks in the basement lying like tombs with P&O steamship labels on them, wartime letters folded inside with cello packets of mothballs, peanut butter and grape-jelly the newest snack (*all right but don't you dare touch that knob with your sticky fingers*), we lie on the floor, three sets of ears tuned to woven speaker fabric fronting the console before us, three sets of eyes focused on its tiny amber navel as if to conjure what our ears anticipate, the opening chords of *Mystery Theatre*, its scary elsewhere, while the house settles down around us, not Canadian, but almost.

.

*Dearest Mother—Thank you for yours. We are more or less settled, which gives me a chance to write a decent letter. The house is (well, what can I say?) typically Canadian I suppose—heated by burning sawdust, if you can imagine—Charles finds this appropriate since he is working for a lumber firm! The rooms are on the small side—such a shame! The wardrobes we shipped from Malaya won't fit anywhere but in the cellar. But there is a sweet little Church of England—known as Anglican here—just a few doors away & a few shops on the corner of Lonsdale—rather like a High*

*Street. On the other hand, one absolutely has to have a car—because of the distances. Fortunately the girls can walk to their school—which has the rather poetic name of “North Star”—a bit quaint don’t you think? But then we are living halfway up a mountain & almost in the wilds!*

•

surrounded by bridges, backed up against mountains. inching forward in long commuter lines to the Lions Gate toll booths.

•

Splendid, he declared of the mountains, writing home to England. Particularly on a clear day when we drive back from the city over a rather fine suspension bridge.

•

*Twin mountains they are, lifting their twin peaks above the fairest city in all Canada . . . so Pauline, beginning to tell the story of “The Two Sisters”—a name “absolutely unknown to thousands of Palefaces who look upon “The Lions’ daily.” now i have a name for what we are. i know the secret name and story of those mountains to tell my two sisters.*

•

near St. James (looks like a bastion not a church, she said, but then I suppose it has to look like that here) where the North Van ferry used to dock, we rolled from the car deck onto streets thick with foghorn sound. she told us to keep our windows up, not because of the rain but because of the men staggering off the curb (for heaven’s sake, he’s just asking to be hit!) in the neon glow of pub and diner. she drove straight towards the ruddy glow of that giant W, its bright aisles, sale items ringed by pushy women, its ping of cash registers. wove her way deftly from one crowded aisle to the next as we tagged behind (where’s Lucy? I told you to hold her hand!), picked up this and that, assessed it, measured it against us. as we trailed out

at last with our parcels to gaze at the wonder of Christmas windows, a blind man who sat on a campstool shook his tin of pencils at us. Here, she said, giving us each a nickel to drop in his worn cap she told us not to touch.

.

driving along Marine Drive, we could see the silver spires of the Catholic church gleaming on the reserve, but that was there, we never turned down there.

.

on the radio now, the final bars of Chapman's "Grouse Mountain Lullaby"—solemn, funereal. what ever happened to *that jolly chairlift?*

.

looking up as we drove past on the old bridge, we imagined we could see Donna's father behind the flare of a blowtorch on one of the girders vaulting their giant-legged way across the Narrows.

.

*the city rubbed out. only dripping trees for company. if I leave the ironing and walk to the other side of the house, the bridge will be gone, and the rest of the world with it. does anyone exist out there?*

.

reading in the tree-shadowed cool of the den when the phone rings. Suzie? it's Donna. have you heard?—her voice sounds strange—it's really bad. the bridge just collapsed.

which bridge? Oo *that* one. thank God it's not the one Charles comes home on.

ambulance sirens down the hill. the radio reports scores of rescue boats—crushed steel, crushed men—(i call Donna and Wade says they haven't heard anything yet)—

doctors and nurses are volunteering, people calling in to give blood—switchboard at the hospital has no information—a crowd has gathered onshore, many with bowed heads—some ambulances are going to the General overtown—(i call again: Wade says they still haven't heard and Donna's putting the little ones to bed).

stop making a nuisance of yourself, Mom says, you're just tying up their phone line.

**the first span, the one with the big overhang, came down . . . men hurtling toward water . . . as the first span settled in a cloud of spray, the second one began to fall . . .**

**the count: 16 men dead, 2 missing, 20 hospitalized.**

.

*all that vainglory, all that talk of triumphing over the Narrows. in the end it all comes tumbling down like dominoes. a broken W in the water. does nobody see it? W for will. that's what it means, collapsed will. as if I didn't know . . .*

and there was Pauline's story shadowing the news about *black murky waters* where the diver drowned, looking for bodies. it was the salt-chuck oluk's stain. had Pauline fudged the Chief's ending? perhaps the Tenas Tyee hadn't really cleared that *trail of blackness*.

a rotten shame, he said. those lives lost and all that money down the drain. we taxpayers will have to foot the bill of course. no doubt some engineer is going to have to pay for this.

.

how can the sun be shining? Margo and Lucy batting the shuttlecock around on the grass and laughing. the world feels odd. there's the wrecked bridge in the harbour and

Donna's dad gone and the whole world just carries on. there's sky and the close-up smell of grass growing—right through an empty space that none of us can see. is this what Donna's thinking?

.

we're wading into the rushes at the far end of Princess Pool, away from the smell of suntan oil and beer, away from wisecracks and cannonball jumps from the dam. Donna's quiet, the trees around us are quiet. what is she thinking? i've found a job, she says, i start tomorrow. where? at the Safeway on Lonsdale, a real job, i think. Cashier, she says, i'm good enough at math. but you're not old enough. i told them i was sixteen. just for the summer? maybe, she says. you can't leave school, i say, you just can't.

## **CENTENNIAL ACTIVITIES GEARING UP**

### **North Van aims to celebrate**

it's good practice for you. Dad sounds encouraging as we drive onto the old Second Narrows Bridge, its metal deck-work slippery in rain. just remember to keep the wheel steady. my knuckles white against skidding. the wreck of the new bridge looms beside us. keep your eyes on the road, he snaps. this bad luck bridge, this bad luck crossing.

you're going to stall, he's tense beside me. give her more gas. i can't, we'll skid. gear down then. is the lift section going to rise? keep going, you have a green light.

we jerk along, my foot hovering between accelerator and brake, slow / fast / slow, towards the solid bulk of the grain elevators there on the other side.





Jim Breukelman, *Moodyville Park, with Grain Elevators*, 2008  
Chromogenic print on Kodak Endura, 126 x 150 cm  
Courtesy the artist and Republic Gallery, Vancouver

## LISA ROBERTSON / Fourth Walk

The sky over the defunct light-industrial district was still the sky, less sublime, but more articulate. And walking what we witnesses was, like a flickering appetite, the real end of sunlight, buildings torn out of the earth and forgotten, the superabundant likenesses of pictured products collapsed into our dream and over and over in the dark the flickering appetite now bunched under the ribs. We were partly in another place. It's hard not to disappear. I pondered this ritual of crisis and form as my guide and I walked the unprofitable time of the city, the pools of slowness, the lost parts. We breached the city's principal at every moment with our incommensurate yearnings, and in the quasi-randomness of our route.

Ruined factories rising into fog; their lapsed symmetries nearly gothic. The abandoned undulations of the vast mercantile storage facilities, the avenues of these—sooty, Roman, blunt—and down below, the clapboard family houses with little triangular porticoes, lesser temples in the scheme, but as degraded. And in these rough and farcical mirrors, the struggle to recognize a city. By a habitual process of transubstantiation, some of this struggle was named “the heart.” But we wanted the heart

to mean something other than this interminable roman metronome of failed egos and placation, something more like the surging modifications of the inventive sky. So we attempted to notice the economies that could not appear in money: vast aluminum light sliding over the lake-like sea; the stacks of disposable buildings labelled Women and Men, decayed orchards gone oblique between parking lots and the complex grainy scent that pervaded the street. As we walked we presented one another with looted images, tying them with great delicacy to our mortal memories and hopes. It was as if at that hour we became strands of attention that spoke. In this way we tethered our separate mortalities to a single mutable surface. This was description, or love. "We must live as if this illusion is our freedom," said my guide.

Freed, we moved into the anxious pause pressing forward, that pause shown to us in its detailed itinerancy by every failing surface, every bland or lurid image, each incapable caress. The world was leaning on us, leaning and budding and scraping, as if it too was subjected to strange rules never made explicit.

## NEDA ABKARI / Koocheyee Shahreza

Tara's hair is curly  
long  
in the vein of  
It happened in a day; not even a day  
It happened in the night; not even in the news  
And I face it in the morning.  
Lonsdale.  
I can find every little Iranian trait there.  
Lonsdale Street reminds me of  
"Koocheyee Shahreza"  
I can't remember what we called that street after the revolution  
Revolution destroyed my memories  
Cracked my dreams  
I can find everything in this rain  
But not  
Those street traders  
Those Labou venders  
eating Hot Red Beets in snow  
The cheapest sweet

Ava's hair is straight  
long  
Immediate into the tale  
It happened in a day; not even a day  
It happened in the night; not even in the news  
And I had to face it the next morning  
Duthie's  
I can find rare books there  
But not books in Farsi

there was just one bookstore in Tehran  
Where I could find elegant books  
like Madame Bovary  
Overpriced, of course.  
I cannot pronounce well. I cannot say “TH”  
To me “The” is just a simple “Dah”  
In Duthie’s  
I picked *Seniors*  
I open it and ask Paul what is the meaning of “jacking off”?  
he was shy  
Paul was shy but the stranger behind us says “masturbating”  
Refugee, Immigrant, Citizen  
This is all a process  
Exactly like BA, MA, and PhD  
I am a citizen  
I pronounce “3,” “Tree.”  
was early in the morning  
Just a simple morning  
is always something about the early morning’s call  
it’s something about them  
frightened, beating heart and news I knew.  
He is not here anymore and is not yet even 1994.  
Zalzadeh was killed  
At his house  
In the middle of the night  
My publisher is killed.  
WHY, WHY, WHY!  
These stupid WHYS, we know them evidently

My hair was long  
in the vein of the morning  
It happened in a day; not even a day

It happened in the night; not even in the news  
I did not want to face it.  
I did not cover my head.  
I did not cover my hands.  
I did not cover my legs.  
I was 10, just 10  
not even 10  
I was stoned in the morning  
with my red bike.  
I pedaled fast, faster, too fast  
I could not see anything  
I had got home.  
I was in the middle of the tree  
I wish that I was a tree.  
Trees never changed after revolution.  
my girls are loud  
We drive  
I put them in my lap and I let them drive in the cul-de-sac  
they laugh and scream  
My mother says:  
“Nazar har cari mighan bokonan  
Bachee bayad harchy motharesh mige goosh bedeh.”  
We have reasoning  
And rules which are negotiable  
before setting them up  
Tara says:  
“Don’t see what I am doing  
Tell yourself not to see me.”  
she cannot speak Farsi  
It makes me sad sometimes  
but all these are just kind talk  
And we all don’t know what we are talking about

1987

they catch me in the street

Islamic Brothers

He wants to throw me into the van

They are four

Pull my hands

“Take your hands off of me”

He says, “Get into van

Or I put you in there.”

I say, “You need to have special gloves to be able to touch me, as God says.”

And I run

Fast, fast, too fast

I fall down stairs.

Stairs never changed after revolution.

Beautiful Vancouver in summer

I go to Kitsilano beach

To run

Run just for run

Seagulls are chasing me,

And I run fast.

With seagulls, wind, and my hair all over.

We do not have an “-ing” suffix in Farsi

Ava says:

“Start bebefing my hair now.”

I twist her hair with the morning.

We all get into the car,

Turn on the crazy song,

I rock the car.

Music was prohibited

I take 15 lashes with the whip

Instead of 50.

Lucky me.

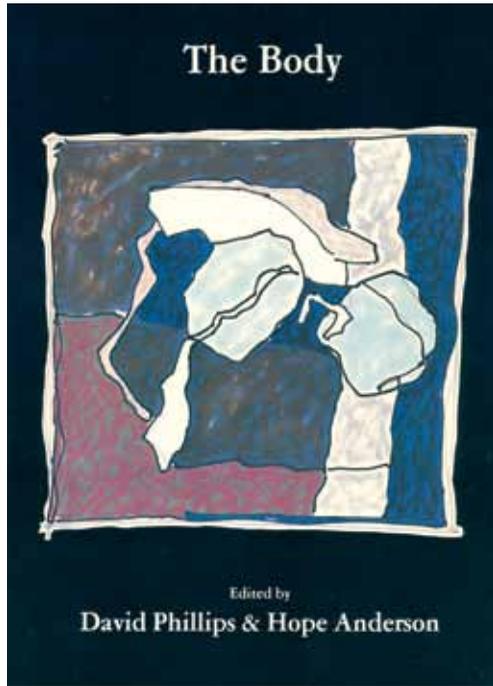
My father pays.  
Beautiful totems at the airport  
Stairs  
Lines and immigration  
Nationality?  
Passport  
How many luggages?  
“Quelle a votre raison de venire au canada  
Qesque vous apportez avec vous?”  
“Je suis Iranienne.”  
Mon passport  
J'ai une valiz  
Et un petit tapis  
Je vien voir mon frère  
S'il vous plait Monsieu  
Laiser moi laiser moi passer.  
D'accord allez-y.  
Merci, merci beaucoup.  
Et je pars.  
Georgia Street.  
My friend says this is the most important street in Vancouver.  
Me with my luggage on Georgia Street.  
My brother is up north still walking and planting trees.  
Summer with my long hair  
It happened in a day; not even in a day.  
It happened in the night; not even in the news.  
His picture was on the first page of the news paper  
With the other 50  
(mofsedeh fel arz)  
Uncle Minister Executed  
I grab it from the front of the door  
I fold it and hide it in my bag

I hold in my tears and I walk into the house  
Everybody knew it  
My mother blends with the couch  
Father cries  
I take the newspaper out of my bag and throw it on the morning  
Run into the yard and swing on the bottom branch of the berry tree.  
Do I have a heart?  
Do I still have a heart?  
Windows are broken  
Walls are broken  
War and eighties  
Tehran is empty  
I take my poems with me  
My brother  
Takes his stamps  
When the bombs come I want to stand beside his innocence  
thank God for sparing his virtue  
But the cats live their regular lives throughout  
Cats never change after revolution  
Istanbul  
seeing my brother  
After years with no permission to leave the country  
We go out for breakfast  
The first beer that I had  
16  
“You had to have it all.”  
I won't help  
I had it all  
Fainting on the morning  
They knocked on the door  
Look for him  
To take him to the war

My mother says:  
“I can not resist this anymore.”  
we pushed him out the back door into the hands of a dealer  
he walked through the war.  
The fog is very thick here.  
I stopped the car, leave the lights on.  
And I show Ava and Tara their shadows in the fog  
And then we drive through the trees  
Mistake  
Roads  
Marriage goes wrong  
Hong Kong  
SARS  
Iraj says  
The Chinese women are much prettier with the mask  
I say Chinese men too  
Lan-Kwai-fong  
Bars and wine  
I sketch women at the Bars  
I go home walk down the stairs  
Morning  
I step on the news  
Turn the key quietly  
He sits on the bed  
“Where have you been?”  
At the bar  
we are not talking anymore  
He is watching TV  
I take the girls to the beach  
Ava wakes me up  
Night is wet

Moon is wet  
Everywhere is wet  
I changed her  
I change the night  
Affair an affair  
How is it going to be to have an affair  
I go to Bangkok  
River  
River was all over  
I am lost in the river  
Orange county  
Poems  
I lost them at the river  
Dance  
On the beach  
I make love with the revolution  
Monogamy  
It happen in a day not even in a day  
It happened in the night not even in the news  
Communist cousin  
Disappear  
Stranger calls my aunt  
Ask her to pick up his body from the morning  
I cover my legs  
Cover my hands  
Cover my head  
I pass through  
From what  
What happened in a day  
Not even a day  
What happened in the night, no longer in the news.

## PIERRE COUPEY / *The North Vandals: A Conversation*



*Was Tatlow House Publishing formed in order to publish *The Body*?*

David Phillips and Hope Anderson formed Tatlow House primarily to publish *The Body*, although I'm pretty sure they envisaged further publications. There may have been other books, even some published under the Tatlow imprint but not produced by David or Hope. But *The Body*, this anthology of work by John Pass, Sharon Thesen, Hope Anderson, Billy Little, Scott Watson, Brian Fawcett, Barry McKinnon, George Stanley, David Phillips and myself, could be called the embodiment of the so-called "North Vandals."

*So all of those published were "Vandals"?*

Well, that "north vandals" tag wasn't something we thought up. We're clearly not a homogenous group, and only David, Hope, John and I lived in North Vancouver at the time. That was Bowering's pun, which he might have conjured at the time of the first Creative Writing Conference at Malaspina College. Or later, after *The Body* came out, I can't remember. And maybe he was only referring to me, David and Hope. I'll have to ask him. I'm pretty sure the majority of the people in *The Body* wouldn't consider themselves full patch Vandals, then or now—honorary Vandals maybe, or volunteer Vandals, or weekend Vandals. I guess David and Hope are the core Vandals, since they both lived on Tatlow Street in North Van.

*What were these creative writing conferences?*

They grew out of the Colleges in the '70s—Capilano, Malaspina, New Caledonia, Vancouver Community College, Okanagan, Northern Lights, Fraser Valley, Douglas, the others—they emerged from our annual Creative Writing Articulation meetings, which we took advantage of to kick up the energy about writing and poetry in BC. So many wonderful people at those meetings: Barry McKinnon, John Lent, Ron Miles, Tom Wayman, again so many others. The conferences also represented our resistance to the universities, whose dead hands we often felt at those articulation meetings, and we thought we

could offer practising writers and our creative writing students richer, more intense experiences in a three day block of readings, panels, and discussions than they'd ever get at UBC, SFU or UVic. Of course, we're all universities now...

### *How did they work?*

The first Creative Writing Conference was hosted by Malaspina and it was a great success. Marvelous group readings and individual readings, Maria Hindmarch, Daphne Marlatt, George Bowering, Fred Wah, Pat Lane, George Stanley, Phillips, McKinnon, with Roy Kiyooka wandering around taking luminous photographs. And at Malaspina we discovered some new poets, in particular Pete Culley and Kevin Davies, brilliant Nanaimo teenagers who've gone on to do real work. The second, organized largely by Jon Furberg, was at VCC with a guest reading from Allen Ginsberg introduced by Warren Tallman. The third, organized by Sharon Thesen and Maria Hindmarch, was held at Cap, where Sheila Watson blew us all away with her brilliance. There was one at Okanagan College at the Vernon Campus where Barry McKinnon kept us in stitches for days with a tour de force non-stop running commentary on the absurdity of it all, and Colin Browne screened his latest film; and the last, which I missed—I think I was travelling, Paris and the Ivory Coast—was at CNC. It was organized by Barry, and called *Words/Loves*, with readings by Audrey Thomas and Ken Belford, and a major reading by Robert Creeley amid Prince George wild times. Apparently Robin Blaser was there as

Creeley's chaperone in the Canadian north. Barry also invited Cohen, Atwood and Munro, but they were busy elsewhere. There may have been other conferences. Certainly the first were very exciting.

### *What dates can we attach here?*

If we're looking at a chronology, blocks of writing things happening on or from the North Shore, *The Capilano Review* started in 1972, the Capilano Poetry Reading Series in 1974, the Creative Writing Conferences in 1976, and *The Body* comes out in 1979. Roughly.

### *Did the North Shore become a focus for you once you started teaching at Cap?*

The North Shore became important for me well before I came to Cap because of my friend David Rippner, one of those hippie refugees from the States at the time of the Vietnam War, who brought that California '60s energy and excitement with him. Davey was famous on the 4th Avenue Kitsilano scene, and later on Lower Lonsdale, as The Leathersmithe—he made sandals, belts, vests and artsy leather stuff, a guy with humor and the best American openness—cheerful, positive and razor smart. So when Davey and his girlfriend moved shop to Lower Lonsdale from 4th Avenue, my family and friends had a reason, for the first time, to cross the bridge. And going into North Van seemed like going into the wild, a trek to some mysterious, far place, like Nepal or Tibet. For some reason we never considered West Vancouver any kind of a destination.

### *So this was in the late '60s?*

Yeah, '68, '69, in there. So that was the first focal point for us to come from the sophisticated urban scene to the wilds of Lonsdale. And then I was hired at Cap in 1970 and started doing the *Review*. At that time my first marriage was breaking down, and I thought, why not be on the North Shore where I was working? For one thing, everything was cheaper in North Van and none of us had much money. I found a slum dwelling on Lower Lonsdale above a café called the Meat Market, a former butcher shop that morphed into a hippie café where everything was whole grain, sprouts, granola and so on.

For \$85 a month I rented two rooms above the Meat Market, two long railway-car rooms. One became my studio, the other my living space: sleeping loft, living room, dining room. The bathroom and shower was communal, down the hall, which the neighborhood drunks and Al Neil made free use of. The place was basic and ugly. In exchange for a painting and a little cash David Phillips agreed to make it liveable. David is a superb carpenter as well as a superb poet. I found a cheap sling of D-grade cedar planks and he turned the rooms into a work of art. Along with a few salvaged Persian carpets, the cedar made it a warm and comfortable place. Some early issues of the *Review* were done in those two rooms.

### *What was the Lower Lonsdale area like then?*

Basically it was gritty, tough, working poor, not at all the gentrified area it's becoming now, but

filled with character and characters. People on LIP Grants pretending to make documentaries, movie set painters like Phil Morgan, a Lynn Valley giant whose name I forget now who was an extra in Fellini films, Barry Cogswell whose ceramics kiln at the back of the Meat Market caught fire one day and almost burned the whole place down, and of course notorious outsiders and artists like Al Neil, who would weave in and out of the scene. And then there was the pre-history of the people who lived on the mud flats—who built the squats off Dollarton, following in some ways in the footsteps of Malcolm Lowry—Tom Burrows and Al Neil and a host of others. And there was a group of kids from Lynn Valley who were involved in poetry, fresh, smart young guys like Martin Jensen, who seemed to know more about Charles Olson than anyone else. Gerald Giampa, the master letterpress printer, was a friend of Martin's and also came out of Lynn Valley. Pieces of culture springing up everywhere on the North Shore.

Lower Lonsdale then didn't have restaurants, it had bars. There were two infamous hotels on Lower Lonsdale, the Olympic which was known as the Big O, and the Saint Alice, and both had beer parlours, both notorious for drunken fights. We preferred the Big O, but we'd count the number of motorcycles outside first, and if there were more than six, we wouldn't go in, we'd head down the street to the Saint Alice and check for bikes there. The Alice also had a cocktail bar called the Cockatoo Lounge, if we wanted to avoid the craziness of the main bar.

*For the ladies . . .*

Yes, and for the more sophisticated drinkers and us chicken-shit poets who wanted to live. . . . It had bamboo walls, fake parrots, it was bizarre. A little outpost of Hawaii, kind of Humphrey Bogart-ish. And then we discovered Mac's Billiards, the best pool hall in the Lower Mainland. This was the unsung jewel of Lower Lonsdale, its heart and soul, and much missed when it had to close. David Phillips and I, and anyone else we could round up, would shoot snooker there at least twice, three times a week. We weren't great, so we never got to play table one, which was reserved for the money players, the pros. And we weren't good enough for table two, which had very narrow pockets and hard banks. But Mac made sure we always got table three, which was just right for us: forgiving pockets and cushions, and every now and then he'd give us a free lesson. A very generous man and the master of his domain. Mac's Billiards was an oasis of peace on Lower Lonsdale, no fights. On one occasion we had a full afternoon tournament with Brian Fisher, Pat Lane, and Dwight Gardiner showing the rest of us how the game was really played. And the conversations about poetry and writing and reading, the jokes and laughter, would interweave with all of this.

*Did you think of yourselves as a group, though?*

If at all, a very loose one, a loose grouping of companions, on the margins, fluid, blues singers, romantics, individual voices, with a certain amount

of defiance of establishment and elders, but not an "organized" group, say, like TISH. We had no program or consensus on poetry or poetics, just a sense of companionship, however momentary, in our deep love for poetry and for writing that energized the field.

*Did you see yourselves as an alternative to TISH?*

No, none of us were "charter" members of TISH, but our basic affiliations are with the TISH poets and with the advanced writing from here and elsewhere they also embraced and championed. So not an alternative, but another inflection from many shared roots and experiences in poetry. And though a younger generation, most of us started working before we knew of TISH. My roots were in Montreal where I studied with Louis Dudek, and David Phillips started writing poetry in high school in South Vancouver with bpNichol. Sharon Thesen and Brian Fawcett must have had their awakenings in Prince George before getting to Vancouver, and Barry McKinnon arrives in Vancouver via Calgary and Montreal and studies with Irving Layton. George Stanley arrives from San Francisco where I'm sure he was in very close touch with much that inspired TISH. And Billy Little arrives from New York, Buffalo, and San Francisco with his own direct ties to the '60s and '70s avant garde American poets. But maybe some of us saw ourselves at that time as more free, more wild, more radical, less theory driven.

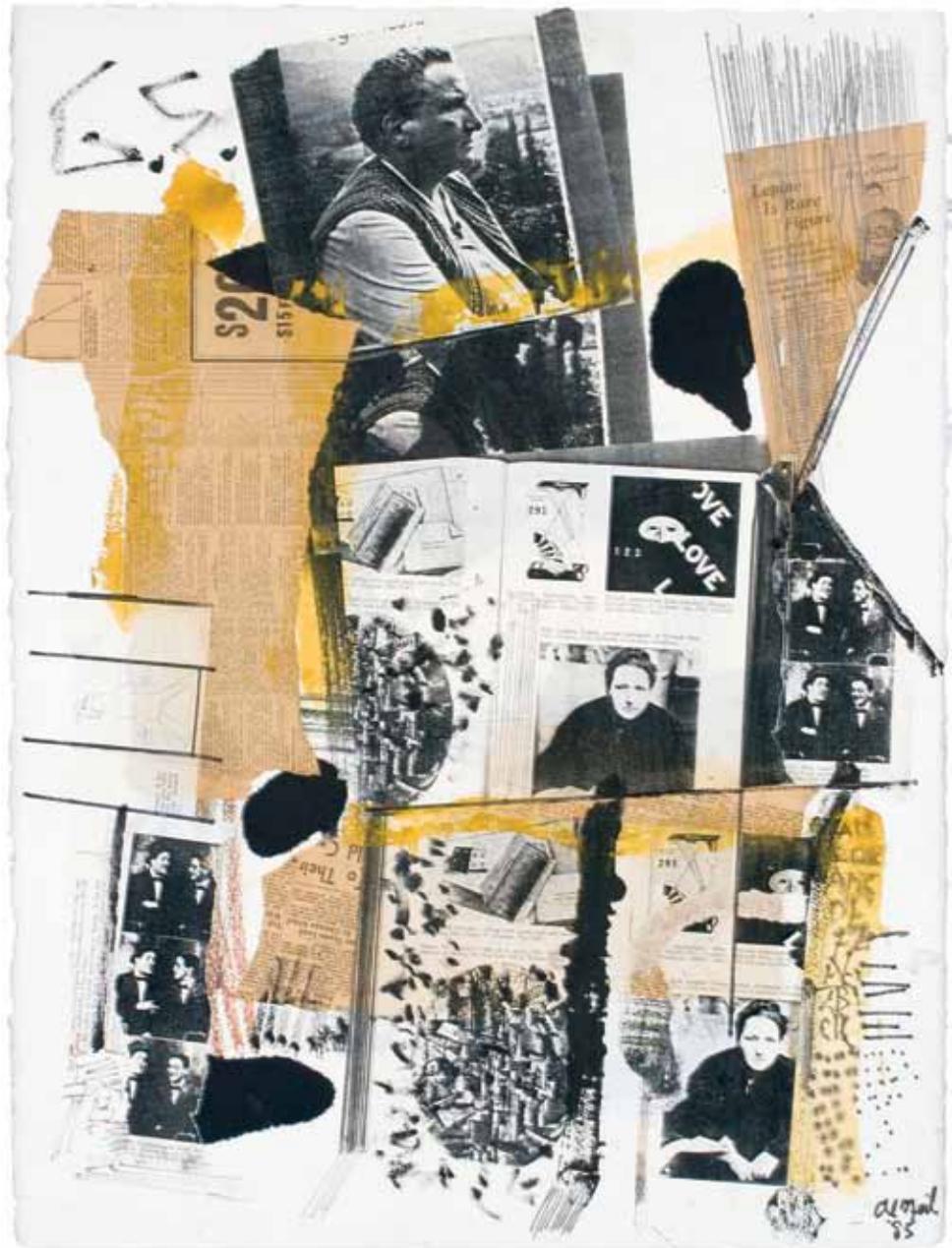
### What was your role with *The Body*?

David and Hope were the editors and publishers, and I was just a facilitator, because of my experience with the *Review*: how to organize a book, take it through a press, design covers and whatnot. They raised the money to cover costs, debated who to invite, worked through the manuscripts, did the final editing.

### Why *The Body*?

Good question, and I'm not sure I can remember the particular discussions that led up to it, but *The Body* seems now the logical culmination of all the parties, dinners, friendships, companionships and conversations—episodic, extended—we had been engaged in until then. Not to mention the laughter and the jokes, the general silliness and craziness, like John Pass's infamous and hilarious Sasquatch Streak. And the arguments and fights—we had our share of those. We wanted to do something to celebrate those gatherings and conversations. And when the idea of an anthology somehow came up, Hope said *let's call it the body*, and that stuck.

We talked a lot about the intelligence of the body, proprioception, that notion of re-enactment, the poetics of place, so many of the ideas that come from Projective Verse and from Williams and his thought on the work of the imagination. And much of the ferment came from Phillips and MacKinnon, the genius of their conversations, both of whom were deeply influenced by Creeley, and much interested in that order of plain and direct speech, in the concrete, the particular, the objective. We talked about what we liked and disliked, respected and admired, what we'd whistle down as fake or pretentious. But nothing formalized—no rules, no manifestos, no program. *The Body* conspicuously lacks a preface or introduction from the editors, anything that would make a claim, but simply proposes a constellation of companions who came together at that time, without any sense then of how we might eventually drift apart because of age, argument, circumstance and geography. And all of us have gone on to pursue our individual paths and investigations, most of us scattered across BC, Brian in Toronto, Hope in Florida, and Billy in Paradise. Wherever our bodies and brains have taken us.



Al Neil, *Gertrude Stein*, 1985, collage, 76.8 x 58.2 cm.  
Collection of the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery,  
University of British Columbia. Gift of Bill Jeffries, 2008.  
Photo: Howard Ursuliak



## AL NEIL / Laughter on 3rd Street

Many years ago I read that D.T. Suzuki, the Zen Buddhist scholar, was asked what it was like to attain enlightenment.

“Same as before,” he replied, “only you are about 2 inches off the ground.”

I’ve never forgotten that answer but I have always found that attempts to take that ineffable stride into non-form work best the closer one is to the ground in the first place. Another way to put it is that the laughter accompanying the first arrow of light hunches you down, bows your leg, claps one hand, snatches lies out of your head, all of which is pretty hard to take in the standing position. So when I left the Big O, our great North Vancouver Community beer hall, on all fours the other night to hitchhike to my home on the beach further up Burrard Inlet, it seemed only natural, since no cars were in sight, to embrace the yellow line in the centre of the road in the half-lotus position. Not only no cars but no people were in sight. And as I have written elsewhere, I spend much of my time, especially when alone, laughing. This I was doing.

Okay, let me tell you that the North Vancouver Detachment of the RCMP has arrested me for drunkenness a few times and usually treat it as a big joke, putting me in the tank for the night. But not this time. Two pigs swooped up off the Big O parking lot, swarmed out of their car, shoving, punching, buzzing around me, shaking me out of the laughter. I went wherever their arms and my feet took me, namely, into their car, into a cruel enlightening dance of some Bardo dream.

UPON HEARING THIS STORY KNOW THAT THERE ARE REBIRTHS WHENEVER YOU APPEAR A FOOL.

Well, we soon arrived at the place where these men have learned to separate wrong from right. Remember now, my “crime” was to have laughed and then entered the laughter, in what I mistakenly took to be the safest and most strongly charged space available to me at the time, namely, the yellow line centring straight down the middle of 3rd Street. Of course I magnified their fear and violence at this point, having been brought back to the station and now being merely high, by going into the traditional rap I use when cornered by the Man,

something like: “When this earth be free and atomic rain is no longer falling into the mouths of birds and children, you and the stupid evil men of wealth and power you protect will have to answer as to why so many of you continue to insanely tamper with thee food of God, why you kill the sky and sully the slender of all earthly things.”

But look, here I am, my back against stone in the lap of violence. Their next move was of course to test me. Against this wall. So there quickly formed up a phalanx, one sergeant, short-haired 40-year old pervert directly in front of me; to each side of him a shirt-sleeved 20-year old just out of Regina training; and v-ing out another 3 feet on either side of them, 2 fully armed and clothed gorillas (the ones who had brought me here).

THE BEAUTY OF MY GARDEN IS INVISIBLE TO THEM AND THEIRS TO ME.

At this point a lapse. Perhaps the sergeant asked me a question and I lipped him. Fuck, wouldn't you? Then inexplicably, incredibly, the sergeant cries out, “Get him. Hit him.” And then, believe it, “Tear his pants off.” At which point they snatched at my pants (they had by then taken my belt and possessions of course), and succeeded in tearing the zipper and buttons.

“Tear off his shorts,” and they shredded them, now exposing my head (bare of my magic rosehip necklace), now part of my groin snatching at my cock and balls.

I USE NO MAGIC TO EXTEND MY LIFE.

I USE MAGIC TO EXTEND MY LIFE.

In great fear I seem to have said, “Look, you have 5 pairs of hands, 10 heavy leather boots, 2 sets of key chains and at least 5 guns. I'm half naked against this stone wall with my pants all ripped. Would you like to come outside with me one at a time?”

One more flurry of pushing, shoving, grabbing, right across the room through an opening and into the cell.

I immediately climbed on the bunk at the back of the cell, faced the door and took up the lotus position. After a few minutes of deep breathing I looked out thru the screen on the bars. Screen? The two cells opposite me had only bars. The third, next to mine, I couldn't see. What I figured was this: mine was the only cell from which one could see the front desk-counter in the outer room

where new prisoners were processed. And of course if they pulled the same shit on anyone else as they had on me, the person in the cell I was in would be a witness to at least some of the action. The screen cut one's vision down to the minimum which would allow the guard on duty to peer into the dark gloom of the cell. There was no light in the room itself containing the four cells, only the little which filtered thru the opening. In the cell directly opposite was a young dude who I immediately pinned as some kind of informer by the questions he asked me and I tended to ignore him. You'll read references to this dumb practise in stories of mine. It relates to earlier busts in my junk days when I had serious information to hide. I kept it up in these inane drunk busts to give myself a little pride or self-esteem which was nevertheless non-existent. In the cell next to the gabby guy I could see all but the head of a man lying flat out on his back with one leg raised. He stayed in that position the whole night. The other cell, as I mentioned, I couldn't see at all.

For the next 4 or 5 hours at 10 or 15 minute intervals they would open a cell door further down the corridor, rattle their key chains against the bars and then slam the cell door violently shut, at the same time uttering grunting, guttural mouthings, the three sounds gathering, first in their space, into one conglomerate of heavy ugly-energy timbre, and then reverberating toward me and for 2 or 3 minutes playing itself out up and down the corridor.

What could I do? Only one thing. I was still in the half lotus as I was to be for most of the eight hours. Each time they did their number I did mine which was to mix my highest energy mantra-chanting into their bad energy mix, wrapping my sound around the ugly timbre as it came by the door, and as their ball of death-sound decreased in intensity my life-chant went up, having the effect of cancelling theirs out. It was a stand-off this way all night long and they got tired of the game I guess toward dawn.

Still in the half-lotus I was nodding out a little when the key chain rattled in my cell door.

“Okay, follow me.”

Out to the front desk once more.

“Fill in this form stating you have received your possessions and you are free to go.”

I glance at the form. It has only a few entries including the following list:

1 pair of glasses  
1 necklace  
1 leather belt with silver buckle  
\$2.85  
1 brown imitation-leather wallet

I began reading from the top down, very slowly, my arms resting on the counter, the paper in my hands. The first line stated my name. That seemed correct. But while I was pondering it I looked up behind the counter and noticed a large clock. It read 6:31 am. Oh Oh. Fuck, what are they releasing me for at this time of the morning? There are no windows that I can see. Is it still dark out at 6:30? I couldn't remember, but if so, I figured they wanted me to sign the form, release me, and then take me somewhere and really do a job on me.

Remember now, the same 5 pigs are still with me, all 5 of them now leaning over my shoulders, not saying a word.

I look up. It is 6:35. Three minutes or so have gone by and I have only read my name on their form.

The next line. Born 03 26 24.

I stop at the first 2 digits, 03. Fuck, I wasn't born in 1903. I'm getting on but I aint that on. It was the third month the 2 digits referred to, and while I was waiting for this insight to hit me so I could move on to the next 2 digits, I started thinking, if I charge these 5 pricks with assault, what should I charge them with? As I worked away on this koan the answer to the 03 riddle hit me. And I didn't yet know if it was still dark outside. My mind in its exhaustion had obviously fallen into old Aristotelian patterns of lineality.

It is now 6:37 am.

In six and a half minutes I had read my name and 2 digits of my birthdate, and raised my eyes 3 times to the clock. The 5 gunmen are getting nervous.

I began laughing.

I was immediately spun around by the sergeant with great force.

"Hit him hard. Tear his pants off."

Yes, incredibly, they did the whole routine again and I'm back in the cell.

Okay, in another 2 hours, around 8:30, I was aroused from a slight nod by a pleasant young constable. The sun streamed in from somewhere. He was all alone except for a young woman now seated behind the counter at a typewriter.

He stood beside me and counted off the items belonging to me, handing them over.

“That’s a nice necklace, what is it made of?”

“Rosehips.”

“Ah, Vitamin C.”

I signed the form and turned to go.

“Button up your fly before you go.”

“I can’t, your buddies on the night shift ripped it off.”

Moments later I was on Lonsdale heading down towards the waters of the inner harbour. At the Sally Ann Old Store I purchased a good pair of corduroy pants and a good shirt for 25 cents each. In the Moodyville Cafe at 2nd and Lonsdale I ordered what turned out to be a wonderful breakfast of ham and eggs from a lovely lady and retired to the washroom to wash up and put on my new purchases, throwing the now dirty, torn clothes into the trash can.

After the leisurely breakfast (\$1.50 including smiles, 2 cups of coffee and a free *Province* newspaper) I walked out into the now warm sun, slowly sauntered across Lonsdale, along 2nd and into the Big O, ordered 2 glasses of beer and began thinking about day 2 at the Munich Olympics.

1981

## MICHAEL TURNER / Rewriting Lowry for Lowry

*An Inhabitation of the Grammatical Structure of Malcolm Lowry's  
December 12th, 13th, and 29th, 1939 Vancouver Province Articles.*

Somewhere in Dollarton a squatter sprawled across a table. Around his head a hangover. In his swimming trunks he seems beached.

This man, a writer, despite his unlikelihood, a writer. So was what he received from Cheshire, as writing. As one who reads but doesn't believe, news of his freedom, a chance to manage his own affairs.

Scene of the refinery and the volcano alike; the town where Boris Karloff helped build the rollercoaster, where Marie De Carlo's daughter tried, unsuccessfully, and in advance of a name change, to repeat the success of Baby Peggy, Vancouver the Superfactual, where Chaplin could perform in the Orpheum from Siwash Rock, and fish and chips are served with catsup, had been consumed in this instance by the efficacy of gin.

How close he was to the failure of his earlier work. With their Hey, what the fucks! It's *The Ship Sails On!* as they laughed him off the planet. Now everyone laughed. Though nowhere as hard as on the inside of his head.

It was his syntax, this spawning ground for clauses, the prolix bits he refused to give up on, or even the false starts, brought on by the effects of Bols, with, inevitably, its own cheap mix, which affected him: there was also the elements. Jimmy Craige, making a boat, but unable to do so without hammer and saw. Margerie, his wife, with her red pencil lipstick; the shack, turned upside-down. The Canadians, with their French, and their talk of poutine sarnies.

The forest behind him, full of cedar and fir, held their birds quietly, warmly, fitfully, as when the wind blew. Not that the wind was unfriendly! Because, as Margerie pointed out, this section would be better at the beginning of the novel, then, a moment later, it was blown off altogether, boxed in her red pencil.

And none of this, apart from Jimmy Craige's tools, the smell of burning turps, the burp lodged in his throat the past week, reduced the elements to nothing less than the afterglow of a pearl grey day, so that inevitably he was his own writer, or someone sprung from him, steeped in what comes next. Did it not appeal to him, he asked, on such short notice, mere factuality?

The consequent infusion was self-sustaining to whatever Dollarton protruded, slow and molten.

One saw a smoked Vancouver, a sort of Pango Pango, wreathed in British values, a city as pure as a sausage-and-mash tostado; and at the southern border, that tipsy immigration officer too weak to finish his bottle.

One saw a North Vancouver, sloping northward, a city and a district, which ignored its Injuns, and which built its homes around them, an inverse wagon train of static Victoriana filled with paled-faced Scotch trade-unionists and mums with bitten lips, loping up Lonsdale, hauling bags of ship-soiled laundry, the lights atop Grouse Mountain.

One saw, too, the two-pronged Lions, the Holy Grail of Sunday painters, which art suppliers everywhere would offer meat to if it meant they'd birth another, provided it looked just like them; the air between each spur, like a measure, an ingredient, this imperfect caryatid, incapable of elevation, praise, only pinching effort. Yet if Dollarton, a summer spot animated by year-round lease-holders, converting those holders into ornamental hermits, has been right in anything, it is the right to look back on those coming ashore, as if from another planet, a planet that, in spite of its distance, declares "We come for nothing other than what we know," and then asks if we have pitchblende? But whatever, it is nothing, and we have that in abundance. A recent note from Aiken, impatient for a new Romantic poetry, inspired these words: "If the totems that prolong us were made of concrete and not cedar, if they stood not in forests or on beaches but alongside urban towers, if they were occupied by Martians, aliens from a red planet, participating in their own spectacles, we would treat them no less different than if they crossed the sea from Asia." And from this mediocre passage let us pass on a "whisper" to the enemy within, that Canadians are elves.

I am Malcolm Lowry.

If in response to what I am doing here, in Dollarton, let me say that the Depression has been a long one, and has nothing to do with economics. Or, if still unsatisfied, and in need of seasoning, it is not the war that has exiled me but the war I have made of self. To myself I have always been my writing.

It is wise, I think, to spend time with oneself, and if it takes the odd glass to get me there (and back), let it be known that I am a swimmer. A skill I was born with, like breathing, feeding, sleeping—the verbs that make us. And I, like Aitken or Grieg, am no exception. You may run screaming when you see me, drinking, but you will never catch me drunk.

So yes, it is I, and if you want to know where I stand, it is here, in Dollarton.

At the edge of Pango Pango, under Seymour Mountain, an oceanfront shack, one of the shore's finest, if not best, domiciles, built by better men than me, men who move like broken gates and stand alone like trees. It is good for writing, and Margerie thinks so too.

My days, and by days I mean my nights also, are devoted to writing; thinking, pecking, stopping to look at passing ships, the \_HELL sign, the jagged trees beyond. When not writing I take exercise, charging up the path from our door, or the ocean before us, a jackknife off the pier.

Last night, while drinking, Margerie confessed; she said she was frightened and wanted to know if I was real, and not sent by something otherworldly, like that man I told her about in the forest that day, Thomas Stansfeld-Jones, disciple of Aleister Crowley, warlock. He goes by the name of Frater Achad, I told her, reciting his magical name, pleased with myself for having remembered it! He has offered to teach us the Cabbala, I went on to say, noting that our Consul is becoming something of a mystic, and that Achad's knowledge of the black arts, however he came upon them, might prove useful to our character's development. Margerie was calmed by my response, I could tell, letting me know in that subtle way of hers, the way the corner of her mouth goes from dash to comma, her tiny hand reaching for the bottle, filling my glass with her own.

So it was with no small degree of serendipity that who should we find on our pier this morning but Achad. Racing down to meet him, eager to share the



coincidence, I felt my left foot catch and what remained headed for a crop of barnacled rocks, a starfish on the largest. Having resigned myself to the inevitable, I asked, Will I walk again? Will I need a cane?

And then a most peculiar thing, something that has happened only once before, as a boy, while boarding at Caldicott, racing after a butterfly—a Grizzled Skipper, quite large, with magnificent tips—along the crest of a hill whose edge came out of nowhere, like the hand that grabbed me, pulling me to safety, as Achad’s did when he saved me from those rocks.

Margerie saw the entire episode. And later, after Achad had excused himself to visit the latrine, she told me, in some detail, how my rescuer seemed to have travelled thirty feet in a single second, as if propelled by a force unknown, catching me within an inch of the starfish.

Upon Achad’s return, I asked Margerie to recount what she had told me, for I was most impressed with her telling, finding in it a syntactic structure unusual for her, but one which I wanted to encourage, in the hope that she might recall it when reading a passage I had finished moments before Achad’s arrival, where the Consul flees a dog.

Unfortunately it was at that very moment Margerie spotted the Birneys coming down the path, and up she jumped to greet them. I called after her, in a whisper that came off as a rasp: I'm sick!

As it turned out, they had only come by to drop off Earle's new book, a volume called *David & Other Poems*, "David" being something he had read to us on a couple of occasions, the story of a fallen mountaineer who asks his fellow climber to push him over, because he will never walk again. I told the story to Achad, and he laughed. Not the response I had imagined. It was then that he reminded me of what had happened on the pier.

It was not long after the Birneys left that Achad pushed off himself, declining my offer of a walk to the bus stop, but not before asking for a glass of water, so he might recite a few lines of his own:

Behold, a new Aeon  
Shed your clothes and receive rebirth  
The Book of the Law is for all to read  
But do not abuse its ciphers . . .

I forget the rest, though Margerie took inspiration from the second line, donning her swimsuit before racing outside for a dip.

Okay I get it, I hear you now, my future's called "The Monster"?  
And my past of course this horror show, with boys who called me Lobster.  
In-between is where I sleep, in a bed that's ever-shrinking  
And no matter how I hold myself: it's the bed that does the sleeping.  
Okay, no more, I need my rest, my eyes have caught on fire,  
But do they have to turn to ash for me to be not tired?  
Margerie, we've shared so much; only you know what I fear,  
The things that keep me paralyzed, that drives us both to tears!  
I recall that day in Hollywood when you offered me a brandy  
How the weather turned the liquor's notes "from history to candy."  
We spoke of books we'd read about, the one that you were reading,  
Do you recall how suddenly you accused us of competing?  
I'm tired of all the fights we have, they seem so fabricated,  
Let's change the course of alcohol and boo the decorated.  
A gentle walk, just you and me, the forest path is waiting,  
Please come with me to Cummins' Store and pretend that we are dating,  
The way we did in Malibu, when the ocean's waves stood still,  
And that fisherman who called to us and asked, Are you two ill?  
Such is love without a brake, the power to transform,  
That turned our sunny faces grey as sickness seeks a storm,  
A rain of tears fell from our eyes, as lightning struck our hearts,  
It hurt to feel the way we did though never did we part,  
Tightening our grip instead we vowed to meet up soon.  
(Am I a fool to behave like this, a howler at the moon?)  
I bring this up because it hurts, and hurting is still living  
Because the love you've offered me is mine to keep on giving.  
Now if you please, I'd like us both to walk to Cummins' Store,  
Not to buy the things we need but to get us out the door,  
Into air that's fresher than what our shack's providing,  
Another second in this place, I'll feel that I've been hiding.  
And you know for me to feel like this is to conjure up my father,  
Who hardly ever looked my way and when he did was bothered –  
Annoyed that I might love him! Wake up and let us go,  
I will kick The Monster from our path and chase those boys for show.



## ANDREA ANDERSON / Looking for the Utopian

Maplewood Mudflats, a 96-hectare area of mudflats two kilometers east of the Second Narrows Bridge in North Vancouver, was the site where in the 1960s, professors, dope dealers, and craftspeople squatted alongside the more traditional inhabitants, retired fishers and driftwood sellers. When artist Tom Burrows returned to Vancouver from London in 1969, he became a part of the mudflats community. Politicized by the events of May 1968, he considered squatting an art form open to everyone.

In general, BC landscape art had celebrated nature from a Euro-Canadian perspective: a vision of the area as an utopian site. The critic David Thompson described Vancouver's place in this vision as

set, or rather spraw[ling], like no other city in Canada, in the midst of that Canadian tourist cliché, spectacular scenic grandeur. The coastline of British Columbia is of a kind which brings pre-history in the shape of untamed nature, pressing up to the suburbs of the twentieth century.<sup>1</sup>

Burrows altered the romanticism of the setting by incorporating the functional or formerly functional materials found on the mudflats along with pilfered plumbing supplies, metal hoops, and old water barrels. His strategy was to embody the entropy or destructive aspect of nature and the community in the work. The language that Burrows used in his article “only take for granted the things that you can touch” expressed this dialectic of functionality and aesthetic thought, passive acceptance and omniscient observation: the flats were a “source of material” and the window of his cabin was “an observation point.” The “lifestyle on the flats” provided him with “some idea of what was around, of a form that would evolve.” His artwork applied conventional aesthetic notions—“viewing point” and “spatial pattern”—on to the otherwise disorderly landscape. Burrows also viewed human activity on the flats through this dynamic of order/disorder. He linked community with the notion of site:

<sup>1</sup>David Thompson, “A Canadian Scene 1,” *Studio International* (Oct. 1968): 54.

The broadest community is its site. All that is in it is unified by the fact that it is within it. The individual elements within the site are further unified by their material surface appearance. . . . Sometimes all of us take an attitude towards things that can become functional objects within our lifestyle, like chopping a log for firewood or shakes, or deciding about a certain board: I'll leave it there, it has some sense of aesthetic meaning to me if I leave it there."<sup>2</sup>

The squatters' actions were equated with the movements of nature, in an idealization of the state of nature, and their place in it: "the anarchy of the squatters, [their] free non-recognition of the sanctified art object; pragmatically removing glass for a window and wood for the fire . . . ."<sup>3</sup>

Burrows' aesthetic was therefore dependent on the movements of the community *as well as* nature. The pervasiveness of western interpretations of Zen Buddhism also contributed to Burrows' undercutting of functionality to emphasize the formal and experiential qualities of the work. His observation of the community's appropriations of elements of his sculpture was detached, Zen-like, reiterating the Zen belief that all things are impermanent.

Justine Brown describes the anarchistic character of the mudflats community as "possessed of a lucky spirit, the spirit of fortuitous order which springs up unplanned and unregulated."<sup>4</sup> Although Burrows called this equilibrium of human and natural elements "anarchy," he mediated it through the aesthetic framework of the grid; the grid of the window framing the view from his studio and the grid of modernist thought. His "repulsion by the pure romance" of the mudflats setting, and a reluctance to intervene in its natural and social aesthetic economy, was a rejection of the romantic landscape tradition and a reconciliation with the uncontrollability of nature.

The mudflats, in the suburbs of North Vancouver, were socio-politically and geographically liminal to the wilderness and the urban: an intertidal zone in a suburb, a marine and land environment where people lived without property rights and building codes. Burrows represented the place as a site of human

<sup>2</sup> Tom Burrows, "only take for granted the things that you can touch," *artscanada* (Feb.-Mar. 1972): 42.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>4</sup> Justine Brown, *All Possible Worlds: Utopian Experiments in British Columbia* (Vancouver: Transmontanus/New Star Books, 1995), 79.

activity, recognizing the products and evidence of habitation as elements of the landscape. Burrows was informed by the emerging art form of earthworks sited in the environment. While interested in Robert Smithson's approach to industrial ruins on the landscape, Burrows was closer to artist Richard Long whose demarcations of his walks in the countryside consisted only of lines worn into the ground from walking, or stones piled rune-like. Both Burrows and Long saw the earth as an acculturated, productive environment.

The cycles of human activity and materials on the mudflats evoked utopian hopes and goals. Burrows' sculpture on the mudflats [part of his multifaceted project *Skawt Dog* begun in the late 1960s and finished in the early 1980s] incorporated industrial materials that were manipulable by hand. Elements of an old water barrel, for example, were already present in the landscape; others—mainly plumbing materials—were brought from a construction site. The sculpture was inextricably involved with its environment, not imposed on it. Its visual effect varied with environmental conditions, like the height of the tide. The thin, linear, and square elements of the sculpture framed off the landscape, integrating the aesthetic and the natural. Invoking Kasimir Malevich's abstract drawings and minimalist tenets, Burrows envisioned the site as a "visual field": "One is caught up in searching for the spatial pattern the individual elements form in relationship with one another. A relationship in constant flux according to the viewing point, the seasonal changes of the site and its background."<sup>5</sup>

Despite the fact that the sculpture was made of industrial (or de-industrialized) materials, it was not functional. Burrows' imposition of the aesthetic grid edited out the visual and viscous entropic effects of industry on the mudflats: the effluent from Hooker Chemical and Imperial Oil emitted into Burrard Inlet. The Electric Reduction Company was also ignored. The neighbouring Burrard Band's (now known as the Tseil-Waatuth Nation) productive interaction with the environment in the form of a food fishery outside their reserve was also not part of Burrows' vision.

Burrows' experiential approach to aestheticizing the natural landscape countered a picturesque, or sublime apprehension of nature as a material resource for human life and a stage for playing out human psychology. Instead, the lived landscape of human and natural action was represented as integrated with

<sup>5</sup> Tom Burrows, "only take for granted," *artscanada* (Feb.–Mar. 1982): 127.

nature. Even the discarded materials in Burrows' sculpture became beautiful as they were assimilated into the landscape. "The most beautiful sculpture is the sandstone cobble, the heavy square cobble, the cobble you throw at the police." This slogan was scrawled by the Situationist International on Paris palisades during the massive general strike of workers and students in May 1968. The Maplewood Mudflats shacks were covered by shakes or shingles. Burrows transformed the Situationist cobblestone into mudflats driftwood or cedar shakes in a strategy based on both the resistance that squatting poses to property rights and the active use of available materials.

Having built his mudflats shack partly to provoke the argument over property rights and building standards, Burrows knew it would not last. The squatters' occupation and activities on the mudflats were curtailed when the District of North Vancouver chose to consider the Grosvenor Plan, a major commercial development for the mudflats proposed in 1970, which included a multi-purpose town centre with apartment blocks, marina, shopping centre, hotels, theatres, office buildings, and other amenities. The plan was never implemented, but the inhabitants were nevertheless forced to leave. Burrows' court battle resulted in the bulldozing of his and other shacks. Although most shacks were razed on December 18, 1971, some on private land remained until March 1973; the commercial development that was the premise for the expulsions never happened. It seemed that the issue was really that squatters were not ratepayers and the proposed development served as an excuse to remove them. Burrows made a performance event out of the razing of his shack. He hauled it over to a piece of disputed land and documented its destruction by fire.

The Grosvenor Plan met with overwhelming opposition from residents of North Vancouver and from planning authorities due to its scale in area and density, its environmental impact, and its lack of respect for the Burrard Band's territory and economy. The only complaints by residents about the squatters that would be displaced by the development seem to have been made by the Districts' bureaucrats: the land was owned by L & K Lumber and the National Harbours Board, who expressed no objections to squatting. The lumber company

was forced to evict the squatters on instructions from the municipality because of purported “unsanitary conditions,” but their willingness to sell the land to the district for development indicates their economic interests in clearing the squats. The charges of unsanitary conditions were trumped up according to reporter, James Spears, who noted the cleanliness of the flats despite the lack of sewage outlets or garbage collection service. An architect who was reported taking pictures of the mudflats houses said it was the last interesting architecture left in this area. No shanty town, the shacks were

two and three storey homes, fashioned with proper beams and covered by shakes or shingles. Light pour[ed] into the high-ceiling rooms paned with glass. The rooms have all the usual furniture. Four of the nine houses have electricity supplied by BC Hydro to run their fridges, radios and lights. All have cold water piped in from a nearby well. For sanitation, the inhabitants use lime pots which convert sewage into compost.<sup>6</sup>

This fusion of architecture, everyday life and eco-sensitivity was an affront to the ideologies of consumption and taxation. In its official community plan in April 1990, the District of North Vancouver council designated the Maplewood flats for conservation—after another battle with residents angry with council’s plan to designate the land as multi-use. The area is now mostly a permanent sanctuary for wild birds.

The squats occupied the liminal intertidal zone of the mudflats. Defined either as land or sea, depending on the map, they were in effect in a no man’s land. This work “positioned itself at the critical heart of social change,” overriding the boundaries between politics and art, and the social and aesthetic. If the “goal of revolution [was] the revolution of everyday life”<sup>7</sup> as Murray Bookchin hoped in 1971, the Maplewood Mudflats squats were the most beautiful, and revolutionary, of its sculptures.

<sup>6</sup> Robert Sartie, “Sun Investigation Finds: Mud Flats no Shanty Town,” *Vancouver Sun* July 27, 1971, n.p.

<sup>7</sup> Murray Bookchin, *Post Scarcity Anarchism* (Berkeley: Ramparts Press, 1971), 11.

## IAN WALLACE / *Maplewood Mudflats Documents*



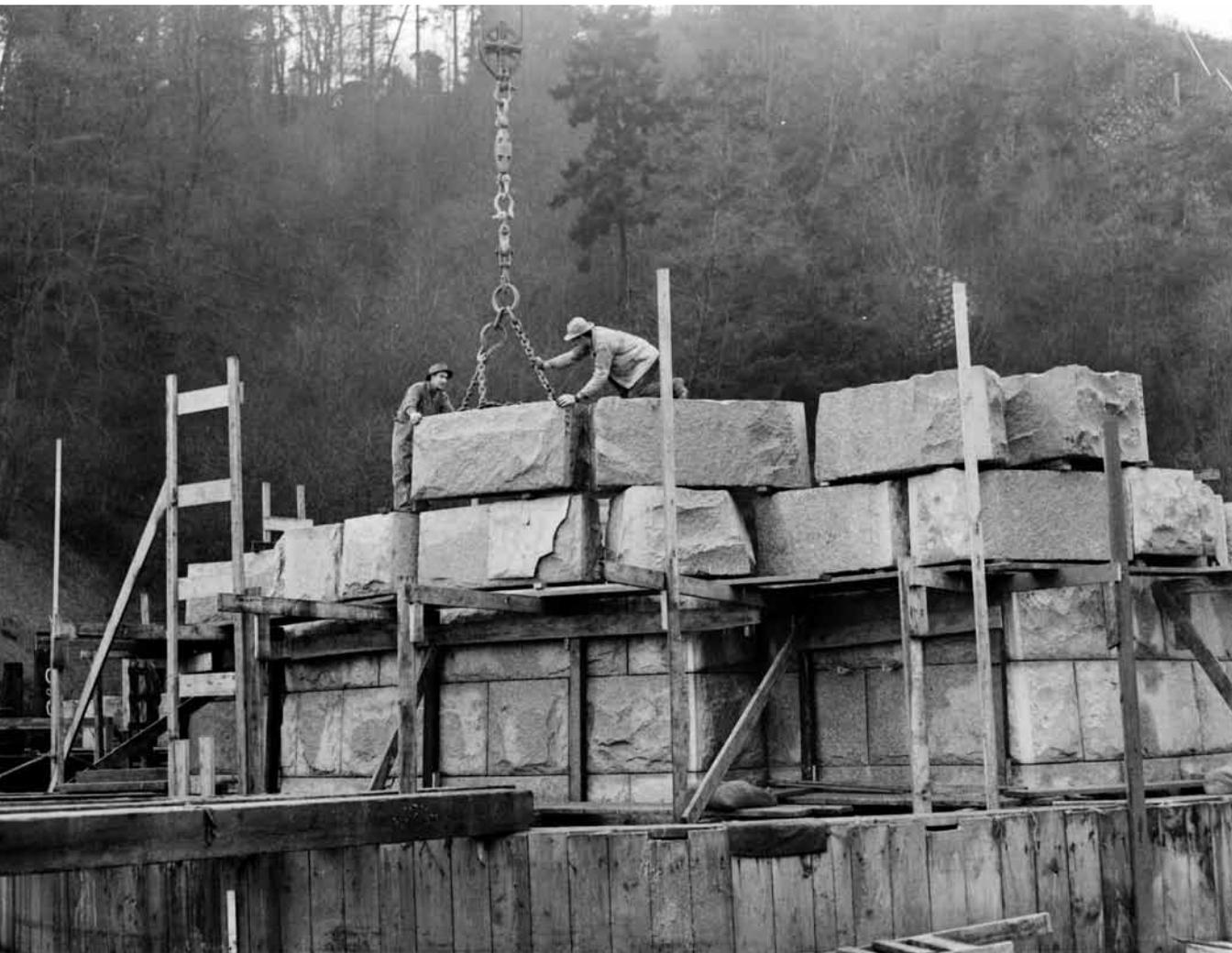












## COLIN BROWNE / Kingfisher Annex: An Excerpt

...that multiform pilgrim species, man.

Herman Melville, *The Confidence-Man: His Masquerade*

Time tells, time's table, a flock—shore horses, dunlins. Who asks! (Whose ask?) Time's ache. The flood of what roars in and out grips and lets go, taking, with it, us, and lets us, taking, take, narrows, furrows, currents, crusts, arches, tidings, herring gyros. How

prosper the tide, prospector? This fence braids the wind. Where the table was set, the sand is sick. Tears in flukes, flash scales, you'll, you are, accomplice. To the east of the fracture columns the old houses were torched to cinders by city hall and sod trucked in.

'My grandmother lived there,' he told me. Where that belted kingfisher. Tide tables all. The city in May 1938 would be terribly familiar. The Georgia Street towers that mimic San José, Costa Rica, in 1971, are props. Pluck them off their foundations and flick them

into the sea, and you'll find Vancouver as David Bolster saw it: vain; skin-deep; on the make; harnessed to the next boom, any boom. Geography's curse. You'd think scenery might exalt a chancer's brain. *Ego*, David knew, *Red Cap* better, and *gate*, to *gate*, well, from

school, and *gaiter*. Every man's a mark but every man's not greedy. Bewildered says it. Is everything that unfolds an accident, or a fluke of providence? Can one endure the alternative? The hotel in the city's lost heart stood unfinished for years, girders and rivets

rusting in the rain. The intersection's sarcophagus to a ridge where corms lie dormant still. A woman carries home animals' hearts wrapped in brown paper. Gulls grill wharves at the hill's foot. Across the water, the slope blotchy with what gored it. The covert joke

is, it's called the 'Persian Properties' now. In 1931, developers projected on the North Shore mountains a vast and profitable enclave for the preferred few—white, nominally Christian (servants excepted). The incentives? Cheap labour, impotent local Bolshies,

property values pickled in exclusivity covenants: one's own kind. Today, hedges rise to six feet only; local trees to twenty-five, none foreign. You'd not want to be hatched in the old millennium's shadow. Not that it troubled the infant David Bolster, uncaressed by

hands other than his own until a few weeks before Zola's *J'accuse!* Am I wrong that these words were once taught in Canadian schools: '*Mon devoir est de parler, je ne veux pas être complice*'? The North Sea entombed his parents about the time the *Condor* broke up off

Cape Flattery. Bolster and his sister, whom he'd never again see, were lodged with kin, in his case Aunt Yvonne and her consumptive husband in Leeds. He took up piano and the bicycle, and with a precocious affinity for Brahms became a regional prodigy. On 'The

Kingfisher', a set of gleaming tubes and spokes, he won the North of England Cup and was in training for *La Tour* of 1915. He detrained in Flanders the following winter, a Lieutenant in the 18th Cyclist Battalion. Bicycles were a hazard in the freeze-up; 'The

Mercuries' became deft puppeteers. Bolster and his tinkers would slither toward the enemy lines in darkness, dragging spools of wire and life-sized millboard dummies.

They'd rig no-man's land like a stage, clipping decoys to overhead wires, then huddle in

craters, clips at their cuffs. In a blizzard, David once gripped the hand and wrist of a buried man, consoling him for hours before discovering there was no man. At dawn they'd heave on the trip-wires, the silhouettes rose up from the grave, the Hun, startled,

exposed himself, and the artillery calibrated....

...What's more precious than land to, or for the living? Land for the dead. The living fend for themselves. In 1927, the *Eurana* rammed the Second Narrows Bridge, followed by the *Norwich City* in 1928, the *Losmar* in

1930, and, on September 13 of that year, a sailing vessel refitted as a log barge, the *Pacific Gatherer*, gathered the central span to its reward on the bottom of Burrard Inlet. The only span to the North Shore was out for four years. The District of North Vancouver filed for

bankruptcy, eventually falling into receivership. Talk turned once more to a first narrows crossing. West Vancouver, years earlier, had offered land in return for a bridge. Businessmen A.J.T. Taylor and W.S. Eyre came up with a proposal, and, miraculously,

an investor. Thousands of acres of first growth mountainside west of the Capilano River for twenty bucks an acre and back taxes. It's the duty of capital to encourage increase by maximizing profits and minimizing tax payable; the benefits of moving money to Canada

were clear to Rupert and Walter Guinness. In 1931, British Pacific Properties Ltd.—their Trust being the major shareholder—acquired the lower slopes of the mountain range at an irresistible price, and financed, at Depression wages, an eighteen-hole golf course, a

school site, sewers, roads, water lines and, notably, a handsome suspension bridge—the Empire's longest—a take-off ramp for golfers gathering steam on Georgia Street. To will a suspension bridge skyward, with cables taut and in tune, is a triumph. To fly men into

the air on catwalks with buckets of rivets, hammers and paint is a proclamation of faith. When the brothers first disembarked in Vancouver, General Maude was marching on Baghdad, where he announced: 'Our armies do not come into your cities and lands as

conquerors or enemies, but as liberators.' Rupert, now the second Earl of Iveagh, and Walter, the first Lord Moyne, returned in 1934 to eyeball their investment. At the Vancouver Club Taylor fed them sockeye and whiskey; they smiled and shook hands.

This was about the time that the *Velos*, a Greek vessel chartered by Yulik Braginski and his Irgun colleagues, managed to deposit 340 Polish Jews on the shores of Palestine without being apprehended by the Royal Navy. Dominion government approval for the

bridge took two years. The local Indian Agent and the Superintendent-General of Indian Affairs in Ottawa promptly sold a strip of land in the village of Xwemelch'stn, on Capilano Indian Reserve No. 5, to the First Narrows Bridge Co. with the blessing of

Section 48 of the Indian Act. An agreement was signed, a trifle offered in return. Not a crumb of land that changed hands that day, or previously, or in the years to come, belonged to any of the principals. Xwemelch'stn residents had no recourse, being

forbidden to vote until 1960 when John Diefenbaker, embarrassed by Commonwealth peers, amended the Electoral Act. Lord Moyne, a pal of the Churchills, became chair of a committee reviewing the *Cinematograph Films Act 1927*. He went after 'Quota Quickies',

closing loopholes that had sent Columbia Pictures north to the old Willows horse barns in Victoria to churn out a dozen 'British' B-movies. Ken Bishop's Central Films collapsed with two Rita Hayworth photoplays in the can. Victoria mourned. Lord Moyne went

sailing. The golf course opened to the public. In 1937, long after the boxes had been stolen or sold off and the remains destroyed, the Geographical Names Board of Canada named the mortuary island in Vancouver Harbour Deadman Island. Workers had long

since demolished the Skwx\_wú7mesh villages of Chaythoos and X\_wáyx\_way in Stanley Park. Chaythoos was razed in the 1880s; the new ring road was graded with the bones of August Jack Khatsahlano's ancestors. He was about twenty then. 'We was inside this

house when the surveyors come along,' he told Major Matthews, 'and they chop the corner of our house when we was eating inside....' Over a hundred years later, not far from where the surveyor sank his axe, a TV reporter inquired of an elder whether

Vancouverites would be asked to return stolen land when claims were settled. The elder gazed at her. 'We've been here for thousands of years,' he said. The reporter tensed up. 'Look at it this way,' he said. 'This is our Jerusalem.' On July 7th, 1936, the shovels

came out; on March 31<sup>st</sup>, 1937, work began on the Lion's Gate Bridge. In Ottawa, just days before, the Canadian Defence Committee had assigned the Committee on the Treatment of Enemy Aliens on the Outbreak of Hostilities to compile names of alien

subversives, in concert with the RCMP. Hungarian-born sculptor Charles Marega had been lobbying Fred Taylor for the bridge gig, a couple of lions couchant at the span's south end. He needed the money. 'I would have preferred the lions to be in bronze or

stone,' he wrote, 'but it has to be cheap, so they will be done in concrete, which annoys me, as I could have otherwise have made both lions from one model.' He died two months after the installation, with eight bucks in the bank. One of the creatures is the

tomb for Fred Taylor's baby shoes. That year André Breton published *L'amour fou*. MOMA's Christmas show was 'Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism.' *Time* saw Breton as a thicket: he 'frequently dresses entirely in green, smokes a green pipe, drinks a green

liqueur and has a sound knowledge of Freudian psychology.’ Untrue for the most part, and ‘sound’ insults, but the sartorial note might checkmate an infamous lumber jacket. David Gascoyne rendered Breton with clarity: ‘...our unceasing wish, growing more and

more urgent from day to day, has been at all costs to avoid considering a system of thought as a refuge.’ What if you lived the spirit of his words? Is refuge like virtue? Breton later put the bruise on Gascoyne for flirting with God. Palestinian fedayeen ambushed

agricultural workers in March 1937 near the Jewish Colonization Association’s Mesha colony in the Galilee. ‘... a party of British police with a Lewis gun arrived at the scene and drove off the attackers, killing one and wounding two others.’ Here began the long

season of terror, of mutual bombings and assassinations, of carnage in public places, of reprisals—*‘We have left undone those things whiche we ought to have done, and we have done those things which we ought not to have done, and there is no health in us’*—all to secure the claim of our

fathers, the right to plunder the other’s graves. Who controls the land takes the upper hand. Blood, blood. The red smell of it. A pistol that year began its journey to Cairo. The First Narrows suspension bridge, pre-fabricated in Montréal, would be 1,550 feet long

with a high tide clearance of 200 feet, independent of temperature or load. Ten thousand tons of steel. As for his sexual being, David might have named its heat, but the nights flew by, and the days. And Jean? Sex was the unnamed third person in the room. For reasons,

perhaps, of their vocation and the failure of their ambitions, it became a habit, blessed by familiarity, to use their stage names. Their west was a two a.m. Chinese café, the cops, the drunks, the Friday night cowboys, poker players, politicians, Indians, the ghosts, the

girls. Streets were wide, windy, banked with snow. Jean spoke often of dignity. David observed a sandy-haired man shaving and wondered, ‘What was it? What did he love? Why was he in a nation founded on no idea, in which what mattered most was concealed,

where obsequiousness, acquisition by stealth and repressed insolence were virtues?’ Lord Moyne, who, with Lady Vera Broughton, was the first to cart a live Komodo dragon home to England, concluded a voyage and published a new book, *Atlantic Circle*, with

Lady Vera's photos. 'The journey of my yacht *Rosaura*,' he wrote (it being a 1210 gross ton former Newhaven-Dieppe packet), 'had certain definite objects, namely, to visit the pure-blooded Eskimos and the sites of extinct Norse settlements in southern Greenland,

to collect pottery and other archaeological specimens of central American cultures, and to make zoological collections.' He'd a ship's monkey. He was a grave robber, or a grave robber's boss. Who, pray, of our triumphant party, is not? In pine forests flickering with

siskins and chickadees, beside oceans pulsing with fish, gentleman adventurers ransack the precious necessities of the dead. On May Day, 1938, employed and unemployed men rallied at Lumberman's Arch on the site of the old village of X\_wáyx\_way to protest the

national assault on workers. Jack Lawson, the first Mac-Pap to return home, with the president of the Spanish General Worker's Union, and exiled novelist Ramón José Sender, gave a closed fist salute to fallen comrades. The slaughter, they said, has begun.

Between the beaches, workers were joining forms in the ferns for 6" gun batteries. When Dick and Sophie stepped down onto the platform on May 27th, supporters of the Relief Project Worker's Union still held the post office and art gallery. Dick and Sophie could

do the show in their sleep, and often did. They were due to go on that afternoon at the Victory in Vancouver, a grimy vaudeville parlour weeks away from demolition. That night, steelworkers would clamber to the peaks to secure the cables. Steel wire is

treacherous; it expands, kinks and flips in the hot sun. Onshore winds ventilate the narrows at dusk, and with rip tides racing, a splash of fins and a heron's craaok, steelworkers begin pulling and bolting strands, one-by-one, into the forty-ton concrete

anchors buried deep in the rock and under Xwemelch'stn. Tuned with a mallet, a tuning fork and a wrench, these are the strings of a 1,550-foot lyre straddling the narrows, its resonant chord humming out over the harbour. Dick and Sophie press against the

curtain; Sophie yanks at her skirt, Dick rubs his specs against the moth holes in his tunic. He's two days into a bout of Bell's palsy. The *Attratto*, ferrying 1400 refugees, is gliding through the Mediterranean night sans running lights, looking for a light on the beach. On

their first date at the Victory, the manager hired a pit orchestra—Great War veterans, if you believed the program—loyal sons of Britannia. Not one, a decade later, is alive. The fellow on the horn fell in while fishing. One was run over by his own Ford. At any rate,

times are tough. Dick glances at the Mrs. perched on the edge of her bench. Her son has rheumatic fever; with the old man gone she likes to speed up the numbers. She flips to the first sheet. Sophie peeks through the curtain. In December, 1941, a broken-down cattle

boat, the *Struma*, flying the Panamanian flag, anchored off Istanbul for repairs with 769 Jewish refugees aboard. Without a British guarantee of entry into Palestine, the Turks let no one ashore. For nine weeks, in desperate circumstances, they waited. The Rt. Hon.

Lord Moyne, now Colonial Secretary, claimed the problem was not Britain's; the quotas were firm. No concessions. They should return to Rumania. Turkish police boarded the vessel, a battle ensued and its boilers exploded, killing all but one, who swam ashore. No

attempt was made to rescue survivors. In 1942, Lord Moyne became Deputy Resident Minister of State in Cairo, then Resident Minister with responsibility for Persia, Africa and the Middle East. His foreword to Ronald McIntyre's *Films Without Make-Up* appeared

in 1943. On November 6th, 1944, Eliahu Bet-Tsouri, aged 22, and Eliahu Hakim, aged 17, members of LEHI—known as the Stern Gang—waited outside his Cairo residence, jumped onto the running board of his car and gunned him down. Attended by King

Farouk's physician, Walter Guinness, who'd spanned the herring-thronged narrows, did not last out the night. Bet-Tsouri and Hakim were hanged in Cairo the following March. A third man enters. His suit is not pressed. He's sweating, and sits away from the others

placing his hat on his lap. Jean looks at David, and nods to the manager's widow, who finds a sprightly syncopation in the first notes of 'Roses of Picardy'. A belted kingfisher, high on a cottonwood, leans into the wind. A grandson in Xwemelch'stn walks to the tide.



## BRIAN GANTER / The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Binner

During a rare moment of repose in the 2008 Canadian feature-length documentary *Carts of Darkness*, the camera stands at a roadside lookout point on the edge of the curved road leading up to Cypress Mountain, gazing outward from the slopes of the North Shore. The vantage point of the camera's view is familiar to any touring visitor or urbanite who has set out from Vancouver to nearby Cypress for an afternoon of winter sports. This particular gaze has become a tourist destination in itself. It directs our eyes to the immaculate top floors of the expansive Vancouver downtown, merging, on the West End, into the forests and foliage of Stanley Park, framed on the left by the grandeur of Lion's Gate Bridge.

The view is predictable, clean, and camera ready, free from obstructions, and painterly.

Yet the full enjoyment of the tourist gaze we may usually experience is blocked. Sitting between us, the film audience, and this picturesque cityscape is the main protagonist of *Carts of Darkness*, "Big Al." Al is at the centre of a community of homeless North Van bidders who serve as the film's subjects. To clarify, the "binner," a collector of cans and bottles found in trash and recycling bins for income, is to be distinguished from the "dumpster diver" whose primary object is the pursuit of food for subsistence—a subculture portrayed with equal intimacy by the French documentarian Agnès Varda in her acclaimed 2000 documentary *The Gleaners and I*.

Most of the subjects of *Carts of Darkness*, all of whom are men, describe themselves to varying degrees as "homeless" not by accident or misfortune but by choice ("getting away from my wife and children"), or by principle (avoiding the "9-to-5" life). In Heideggerian terms they are "dwelling" in order to "build" rather than housing themselves in a "building" in order to "dwell."<sup>1</sup> The film dives full-on into the intricacies of binning, from the mundane aspects of rooting through area suburban neighborhoods—some of the wealthiest in the city—for cans and bottles to fears of police or homeowner harassment to the thrill of a large payoff day ("Canada Day" we will not be surprised to discover is the most lucrative binner day of the year). However the main focus of *Carts of Darkness* is not binning but its relationship to one of this small community's more eccentric and extreme pastimes: riding shopping carts at recklessly high velocities of up to 60 or 70km/h down the long, steep streets of the neighbourhoods of North Vancouver.

The film is shot and voiced by its director Murray Siple, a North Van resident and Emily Carr University grad, as well as a former snowboard videographer and sports film director. Personalizing the documentary, Siple

<sup>1</sup> Martin Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking," *Basic Writings*, ed. D.F. Krell (London: Harper Perennial, 2008).

makes his way slowly into the film in stages, first in the form of disembodied voice-over, introducing his subject matter against the background of rolling skies and clouds of the mountain ranges that back the North Shore. Shortly thereafter he makes his appearance in the film as embodied participant. Reflecting at Seylynn skate park, Siple links the cart riders to the “outlaw” ethos that once attracted him to skating and snowboarding. Then, as Al, hunched over the shopping cart handle, feet straddling the siderails, cowboy-style (“Yeehah!!”) rides his cart down the steep grades of Mountain Highway and Keith Road, Siple jumps full-frame into the film, following in his van, leading the shoot, and clocking cart speeds, which he dutifully discloses at the end of each run. Gradually as the film goes on Siple becomes the binner community’s trusted interlocutor, and eventually confessor to the audience, disclosing to us the roots of the link between his interest in this *nouveau extreme* sport and the auto accident that abruptly ended his days of snowboarding.

If the response of the festival circuit is any measure, *Carts of Darkness* is already being seen as one of the stand-out films of 2008 BC cinema, and for some, of Canada as a whole. The acclaim surrounding it could easily be chalked up to the timeliness of its subject matter. On the one hand the encroaching 2010 Olympics have mobilized Greater Vancouver’s urban transient population, housing resource coalitions, and First Nations and other land-rights advocates. On the other hand the financial crisis sweeping through North America, driven by housing foreclosures, has ever-so-crudely

put matters of class and economic vulnerability into the media foreground. One of Siple’s interviewees seems to be inadvertently referencing the larger financial cataclysm as he outlines his philosophy of binning: “The only true value in this society is the value of a can. A beer can is worth a dime. And a pop can is worth a nickel. It’s the only value that’s stable, and that’s my business.”

*Carts of Darkness* does not stake any interest in addressing the larger issues surrounding the politics of social displacement and economic dispossession facing the binner community. Its focus instead is on their joys and pleasures. As a result, mainstream reviews have largely celebrated what they see as the film’s realist, humanizing qualities. However, the visual style of the film, which includes oblique POV shots (those from under the wheels of racing carts, for example) to a near-farcical conversation on the dangers of alcoholism, led by Al while wearing a large-font “Budweiser” t-shirt, tend to subvert the realist, empathetic tone present in other such social realist and humanizing “people on the streets” documentaries—films like *Streetwise* (1984) or the classic *Dark Days* (2000). Culture critics, from Bahktinians to Žižekians will likely interpret the film as a homage to the carnivalesque culture of the working poor, a tribute to the radicalizing qualities unleashed by an act of pleasure, desire, and *jouissance*—the joyful hijacking of that transcendental signifier of consumer culture, the shopping cart—an act that further underlines the binners’ refusal of the coded certainties of the 9-to-5 life—

not to mention scaring the hell out of casual Sunday drivers.

Putting pleasure and affirmation back at the centre of our politics is a theme revisited with increasing frequency in cultural theory.<sup>2</sup> It has also returned in a more colloquial idiom in Barbara Ehrenreich's recent book *Dancing in the Streets: A History of Collective Joy*,<sup>3</sup> a book which in part implicitly chides the contemporary left for its somber tones ("If I can't bring my iPod to your revolution I don't want to be part of it"). But hasn't this become the equivalent virgin-whore dualism to which political cinema, storytelling, and image-making has allowed itself to be railroaded into: either melancholic realism or joyful carnivalesque?

Makers, viewers, and critics of film alike should move beyond such reductive dualisms. In this light, the reference points for considering the significance of a film such as *Carts of Darkness* should be neither the moralizing traditions of traditional realist documentary/cinema vérité (mourning and melancholia)

nor postmodern political *jouissance* and the rupturing effects of bodies that matter (the collective joy and pleasure generated by hijacking and subverting the signifiers of consumer culture). Another way to enrich our interpretation of *Carts of Darkness*, is to put it in a frame of those films that have addressed the vastly unexplored links between sports and social marginality: from economic exploitation to racism to disability and its discontents.<sup>4</sup> *Hoop Dreams* (1994), *When We Were Kings* (1996), *Murderball* (2005) are only a few of the stand-out documentaries of the past few years that have all touched on this linkage in productive ways. Standing above all of these fine films however is the non-documentary classic, *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner*, director Tony Richardson's take on marginalized working-class youth enlisted to run cross-country for the traditionalist reform school in which they find themselves collectively imprisoned. If *Carts of Darkness* were to have an unacknowledged and somewhat distant cinematic cousin, I'd like to think that film might be it.

<sup>2</sup> For example, Lauren Berlant, "Critical Inquiry, Affirmative Culture," *Critical Inquiry* 30.2 (Winter 2004): 445-51.

<sup>3</sup> Barbara Ehrenreich, *Dancing in the Streets: A History of Collective Joy* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2008).

<sup>4</sup> Dave Zirin, "What's My Name, Fool?" *Sports and Resistance in the United States*. (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2005).



## HELGA PAKASAAR / *Moodyville*

For the *Moodyville* exhibition, seven artists were invited to produce new works that respond to North Vancouver—the locale of Presentation House Gallery and its home in a designated heritage building. The show’s title suggests an imaginary place, a state of mind, and a particular history, especially the city’s ties to resource extraction industries. *Moodyville* was the earliest non-indigenous and industrial settlement on Burrard Inlet. Founded in 1872 near today’s Saskatchewan Wheat Pool terminal, it was a prosperous, albeit short-lived, sawmill community that boasted the first library in the Burrard Inlet. Invoking the city’s beginnings through collective urban memory, the *Moodyville* project explores changes in civic identity as visions of the future relate to a barely-remembered past.

The artists researched North Vancouver as a mental, social, and physical space, resulting in artworks that allude to the psychic atmosphere and spirit of the place—its *genius loci*. Iconic sites such as the Capilano Suspension Bridge, the grain elevators, and the sulphur piles are barely recognizable in the works, while the hidden and forgotten are brought to light: a tawdry paintball field, stumps scarred by logging, back alleys, and phantoms. Their often dystopian views offer clues to the city’s counter-narratives that are to a large extent underground or mythical lore: the notorious Prussian Count Gustav Constantin Alvo von Alvensleben, Burner Boys, Seylynn Skatepark, and Vantan Club, for example. The exhibition reveals the often uneasy space between real and imagined places—psycho-geographies—and the contingencies of picturing that condition.

Questions about “capturing spirit of place” and interpreting history are taken up by Karin Bubaš and Kyla Mallett. Looking back to earlier times, they transcribe narratives of the past as delicate negotiations with the present. Bubaš was inspired by archival photographs of late nineteenth-century summer parties on the lawns of *Moodyville*’s “Big House.” Set in Cates Park, her film is a period costume reenactment of a croquet game played in a foggy, rustic setting. The slow motion footage intensifies a mood of foreboding and anticipation as the four figures interact on a grassy area surrounded by the wilds of nature. This seductive tableau makes reference to historical representations, specifically the attention to social attitudes depicted in the impressionist paintings of Manet. One of

the specially designed costumes displayed as a museum artifact reinforces the temporal mysteries of the scene.

The hauntings and residues of history are equally interesting to Kyla Mallett. She summons the past by evoking the ghosts of Presentation House through a series of spirit photographs shot in the building during an overnight stay. Originally built as a school in 1902, the building was subsequently used as city hall, court house, and police station before becoming a cultural centre. Mallett's work began with an all-night séance, resulting in photographic evidence of phantom-like shapes, apparitions, and spiritual presences in the form of ectoplasm. The cryptic images (significantly analogue silver gelatin prints) include diaristic notations that offer further clues to her encounters with the paranormal. Often using pseudo-sociological methods, in this case interviewing people who had "experienced" the ghosts, Mallett draws out veiled networks of communication through anecdote and the incidental in ways that question the impulse to identify historical significance.

Presentation House as a historic landmark becomes the literal canvas for Babak Golkar's *House of Sulphur*, a chalk drawing on its exterior. His intervention temporarily alters our perception of the building, aligning it with the sulphur piles that visually dominate the waterfront. The motif of bright yellow, the colour of the North Shore's cabs, continues in Golkar's gallery installation of drawings and a video of taxi rides around the North Shore paired with yellow chalk drawing "souvenirs" inspired by those journeys. The work articulates the complex labour economies and socio-political conditions of cabdrivers, a profession dominated by first generation immigrants. Here they are heard telling stories that express their conflicted experiences as "foreigners" drifting through a moving landscape, the backdrop that informs their lives. Through this sequence of translations and displacements, Golkar unveils a complex, social topography.

Mike Grill's own cognitive mappings investigate more concrete terrain. In his photographic series, *North Shore*, he creates a suburban map where nature seems to dominate the architecture, and sweeping vistas lead to uninhabited landscapes of sea and sky. His photographic studies of the spatial relations between the built and natural environments of the North Shore's residential areas suggest nothing but the ordinary to be remarkable. In Grill's streetscapes, domesticated gardens are overgrown by brambles; derelict shrubbery becomes

indistinguishable from encroaching forest. The famous tourist spectacle of Capilano Suspension Bridge strung dramatically between towering forests is pictured as a mundane urban space of asphalt and pedestrians.

The exhibition registered urban landscapes still very much tied to their natural setting and exuding the wet smell of rotting foliage. Dan Siney's large colour photographs dramatize the dominant presence of the wilderness of North Vancouver. By hiking into the forest to document eerie tree stumps left behind by early logging and by recording the moods of a night sky, Siney produces images that result from an intense encounter with nature as palpable sensation. Through this sense of immediacy, his pictures propose a type of sublime experience. Through an equally intense but more distant perspective, Jim Breukelman draws out the intersections of natural and human spaces. His seductively detailed photographs of built environments in relation to encroaching wilderness expose the dynamics of interstitial landscapes, as with the grain elevators viewed through a screen of trees in Moodyville Park. Breukelman's documentary studies refer to prescient environmental and social issues, such as his *PacificCat* project that examined the ill-fated construction process of three Fast Cat ferries east of Burrard Dry Dock, the last major shipbuilding venture in North Vancouver. For the *Moodyville* exhibition, he embarked on an investigation of North Shore Paintball's playing field. With an incisive eye, he records the disturbing beauty of the garishly-coloured tableaux of tires, dirt mounds, and constructed "wilderness" animated by the residues of combat sport.

Jeremy Shaw uses the research methodologies of a social anthropologist, investigating the complexities of local culture, often through the subject of youth subcultures. In his video, *Best Minds, Part One*, Shaw documents the social ritual of Straight Edge youth dancing at Seylynn Hall. Shot in real time, the camera seems to participate in the event. The immersive, slow motion footage evokes a cathartic ritual of seemingly ecstatic and at times violent movements. A sense of druggy reverie is amplified by the hypnotic soundtrack, a minimalist composition by the artist that draws parallels between the end of analogue technology and the ruins of spent youth. Shaw interprets the scene on its own terms. His work considers how cultural life and passing eras are experienced and understood. As with the other artists in *Moodyville*, his investigations of fleeting social conditions give credence to the transient psychic terrains that constitute North Vancouver.

**KARIN BUBAŠ**

**ALISON FROST / Landscaping Form, Space, and Time**

Framed by darkness, a Victorian costume drama unfolds amidst silent forest fog. Hunkering at the precarious edge of landscape we act as voyeurs to 16 minutes of mute and mesmerizing play. *Afternoon Croquet* by Karin Bubaš depicts a croquet game *in medias res*, but a grander, less literal game is underway as the photographer's slow-motion video projection elongates and complicates the inherent cinematic elements of the relationship between landscape and wardrobe. As in her still photography, Bubaš maintains meticulous control over the positioning of the photographer and subject, subject and landscape, and most notably, as she manipulates the relationship between costume and landscape, celebrating a Hitchcockian appreciation of the power of artifice to narrate the coexistence of the sinister and the lovely.

In the beginning is the forest; four heads emerge in the foreground as their figures with backs to us stride into the scene from somewhere behind the camera's left shoulder. They carry their mallets. They walk as if through us, oblivious to us. Not until they are some distance away, arranged on the middle ground, do they turn to show their faces, now too far away to be read.

The photographer ensures that we are not privy to conversation or expression, the distinguishing marks of unique identities or relationships. For Bubaš, faces must be obscured from this work because the expressiveness of the face would otherwise dominate the landscape. It is crucial to her type of storytelling that the figures be shown to belong not to themselves, but to the landscape, even if that union is incongruent and temporary.

We become entangled not in human drama, but in the continual rearrangement of colour, pattern and form, so that this interaction itself becomes subject. The figures are primarily models for carefully selected costumes recalling the Victorian era of "crinoline croquet" when the fashionable set showcased their finery. Two females in heavy navy cloaks offer contrast to a woman in a white dress and a man outfitted in tan and white. Two blonde straw boating hats balance the two dark ones. The croquet mallets twisting lazily at their sides unite them. As the game is played, these costumed figures separate into pairs, cluster into groups of three and four and emerge again as ones, all this in a slow, balanced,

ongoing dance. The figures float within the croquet arena—delineated by the wild edge of the woods and a giant, mossy tree—highlighting not their own identities, conflicts or drama, but the character and activity of the landscape itself. The billowing capes reveal the silent breeze and reflect the greenish-blue tint of the fog. The full-sized figures that entered the space through the foreground shrink against the girth of the ancient tree, the overhanging mist and the fore-grounded tangle of roots. The upper-class finery clashes with the dark, unstable terrain. The frivolity of croquet finds an uneasy spot amidst the incessant moodiness of the ancient moss and roots. Beside the giant base of the tree, the human figures play like Lilliputians in the safe grassy middle ground for a time, until their abbreviated story ends. After all, in *Afternoon Croquet* the landscape determines time. The mist moves in from somewhere at the camera's left as if to replace the players, who seem cued to move out of the croquet arena and then off stage, leaving behind forest, lawn and tree. And there is something ghostly about it all, as silent figures cloaked in a bygone era disappear. The show is over. The landscape remains.



In *Afternoon Croquet* Bubaš is “farming”<sup>1</sup> her images, to use Jeff Wall’s term, rather than finding them. She skillfully places figures into the chosen landscape, choreographing rather than merely recording. In denying us access to the revelation implicit in facial expressions, for instance, Bubaš challenges the viewer to ask what narrative landscape and individual belong to. By arranging her human subjects in a landscape meant at once to embrace and repel them, somewhere between comfort and fear, hovering in the middle ground about to be swallowed into the night or snatched into the thickets, Bubaš cultivates relationships at once natural and surreal. Ultimately, this genteel game of croquet taking place under the canopies of the primeval forest posits what the artist

<sup>1</sup> Charlotte Cotton, *The Photograph as Contemporary Art* (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 2004), 49.

terms “a sort of identity crisis”<sup>2</sup> in which the relevance of Victorian bourgeois ideals in the uncivilized sawmill outpost of Moodyville is called into question.

Further complicating the “identity crisis” is the second part of Bubaš’ installation in which the elegant royal blue cloak worn by an actress in the film becomes memorabilia. Draped on a mannequin and preserved in a glass box, as if in a time capsule, the costume contributes a distinctly self-referential dimension to the film. The replica Victorian cloak commissioned by Vancouver designer Sunja Link sweeps the craggy landscape of the film with an air of privilege and civility but as a precious artifact of a bygone way of life, the costume also becomes a memory of the film. As if plucked out of the fairytale, the cloak represents what Bubaš calls “privilege as a form of value,”<sup>3</sup> a form that survived only briefly after its transplant into North Vancouver’s rugged nascence. The viewer too becomes lost somewhere in space and time. Ultimately, Bubaš’ two part installation takes place in some liminal space, not only between landscapes—the cultivated croquet lawn, the raw dark forest, the clean-lined gallery—but between times. In retrospect, then, it would seem that with each viewing of the film the audience bears witness to a haunting of the very moments when the rules of civilization are about to turn.

As with any haunting, the case of *Afternoon Croquet* leaves the relationship of the croquet foursome a mystery. From whence do they come and where do they go after they play for us? With no definitive answers to be had, we come to recognize that the unifying theme in Bubaš’ work surpasses the individual narrative to play with the more fundamental, and more universal, tension between artifice and nature, the imposition of one on the other. Finding myself anxious amidst this deftly layered interplay of colour, form, time, space and speculation, I recognize that it is the unsettling vitality of the piece rather than its aesthetic composure that truly invigorates me. It is the thrill of shadowing these figures on the edge of landscape, on the cusp of story and history, in the thick of form and fog. It is the chase into the unknown which keeps me in the game even as the screen turns to white and I adjust my eyes to this world.

<sup>2</sup> Karin Bubaš, *Artist Statement*, Moodyville Exhibition, 2007.

<sup>3</sup> Karin Bubaš, *ibid.*









12:25 a.m.: Ectoplasm pours from  
the mouth of the artist  
acting as medium while  
contacting the gallery ghost,  
during a séance.

**KYLA MALLET**

**AARON PECK / Trees without Flowers**

There is a passage in Proust's *Sodom and Gomorrah* that describes a haunted road:

These Balbec roads were full of them, of phantoms pursued, forgotten, and sought after afresh, sometimes for a single interview and so as to touch an unreal life that had at once made its escape. Reflecting that their trees, pears, apples, and tamarisks would outlive me, I seemed to be receiving from them the advice finally to set to work while the hour of eternal rest had yet to sound.

Proust does not mean actual ghosts but rather the effect a place has on us, how our memories of a place may haunt us. What strikes me about this passage is the trees. Their witness and magnanimous advice only *seem* to be given. They will outlive each person haunting the Balbec roads—they will outlive even the phantoms. Whatever it is those trees provide remains inscrutable, outside of our—or Proust's—understanding, but they seem to be saying something. We run with it.

Much like Kyla Mallett, I don't believe in ghosts and yet I'm afraid of them. The building in which Presentation House Gallery is located purports to be haunted. Hence Mallett's series of on-site spirit photographs, a response to the history of Presentation House. An apparition named Frank wanders the theatre; Mallett depicts him listening to Leonard Cohen. No one knows how Frank got his name or why he likes Leonard Cohen.

After rainfall, a cedar will weep for hours with ersatz rain under its canopy, and yet during that same rainfall a tree will provide shelter. Trees just stand there, indifferent and yet profoundly generous. A cedar in the northeast corner of the grounds has survived the building's many vicissitudes. Since 1902 the Presentation House has been a school, a hospital, a police station, and finally a cultural centre, including a museum and archive, an art gallery, and a theatre. Numerous renovations and alterations have rendered the building more of a palimpsest than an autonomous structure. All the while the cedar was there—growing, breathing, rustling. Had Frank, before he was called Frank, rested under its branches?

How do ghosts get their names? Do the names of ghosts connect? Put another way, could ghosts have families the way trees have families? That is not to say how ghosts relate to themselves—not genealogy or heraldry—but a system of classification that humans place on ghosts. Imagine there are five general families or orders: phantoms, specters, apparitions, poltergeists, and spooks. Perhaps the Presentation House ghost Frank, who is friendly, would be from the family Apparition, genus *Friendly*, species *presentationhouse*, so his scientific name would be *Friendly presentationhouse* while *Frank* would be his common, or vulgar, name. But still names can be inaccurate. Botanists will tell you the cedars of North America are not *true* cedars (being from the Cupressaceae not the Pinaceae family). Could the same be true of ghosts? Could their names, like North American cedars, be false or misleading? That cedar on the corner (Cupressaceae) is not a cedar (Pinaceae).

Something in the building's hallway feels strange. What kind of sense, what kind of feeling ... a ghostly sense? Is that feeling a projection? Mallett claims that someone—a volunteer who stayed overnight in the gallery during installation—once awoke to find a “menacing female presence” floating above them in the middle of the night. The PHG janitor refused to be interviewed about what he has experienced in the building.

Outside the cedar sways in light wind. Trees feel no anxiety. Nor is it in their nature to assume human emotions like anxiety, unless of course humans give those attributes to them. And trees rarely produce anxiety in others except in cases of dendrophobia or perhaps the anxiety caused from the fear of trees falling during a storm. But the latter has nothing to do with the trees themselves, more with winds or storms. Unlike me, trees cannot be afraid or feel anxiety, they cannot be haunted. But the Presentation House building, much like those Balbec roads, is haunted. By whom? Frank waltzes in the theatre. Oh Suzanne takes you down . . .

The trees of Presentation House witness in the same way we assume a passive neighbor witnesses a mugging. Over time those trees have endured smokers at openings, cars driving past, archivists, loafers, drunks interred in the police station drunk-tank, rowdy school children, civic officials, curators bitching about other curators, self-important critics, police officers, perhaps even bears. The cedar tree could tell us who Frank was or why he was named Frank, or why the teenagers set fire to the building in 1975, but they don't or can't—at least not in a way we want them to.

Photography, on the other hand, appears to be a more reliable witness, but practices such as spirit photography complicate that reliability. Pioneered by William Mumler, spirit photography—the attempt to document ghosts in the photographic process—was widespread in the United States, particularly during the Reconstruction era, corresponding with a modernization that conglomerated mesmerism, electricity, spiritualism, ethnography, confidence tricks, and even mass transit. The modern world promised transcendence, both material and spiritual. Technological processes like photography, it was hoped, would record things the human body was incapable of experiencing. But spirit photography was often declared a humbug; P.T. Barnum included Mumler’s photographs in *Humbugs of the World*. But much like Barnum’s own museum of humbugs, spirit photography retained popularity even if it might have been false. It wasn’t so much the truth of a procedure but the potential for truth. One believed in something because it could be true. Hence the anxiety produced by a photograph: spirit photography both suspended the truth of a photograph (because it is a staged fake) and yet upheld that truth because we have come to believe a photograph records what has been there. The ghosts it recorded—or perhaps depicted—were moot, because the pictures provided, at best, only circumstantial evidence. Spirit photography’s power lay elsewhere: it crassly evinced the representational potential of photography, not the truth of the spirit-realm beyond. Turn to the early twenty-first century: spirit photography seemed the apt medium for Mallett’s work at the Presentation House Gallery. It could address both the gallery’s focus on the history of photography and on the building’s apparent ghosts.

The cedar rustles. The building’s trees have witnessed more than a camera ever will but those trees say nothing about ghosts, at least nothing we understand. If they have a testimony it eludes us. Ultimately a tree’s magnanimity lies in its indifference. It will continue to produce oxygen, seem to give advice, enrich soil, dampen noise, provide shelter, or even inspire aesthetic contemplation. But, in the end, a tree is indifferent to both humans and ghosts. It will continue doing what it does—as such—until some planner decides a specific tree’s root systems interfere with a building or block a condo-dweller’s view of Burrard Inlet. The moment a tree is felled its absence enters the human record and starts to haunt us.



2:05 a.m.: Ghostly figure  
materializes in attic  
above gallery, then  
disappears.  
Creaking noises continue  
through 4:00 a.m.



3:15 a.m.: Ectoplasm released from  
Damian's mouth, as he  
summons the theatre ghost  
in the dressing room



2:45 a.m.: Theatre ghost (Frank) hovers  
near the sound booth while  
Leonard Cohen is playing.



12:40 a.m. Ectoplasm explodes  
from a wall of photographs  
in the West gallery, after  
a séance is completed

**MIKE GRILL**

**JAMIE TOLAGSON / Immovable Objects**

On first glance, Mike Grill's photographs seem to show us nothing we don't already know. While this might seem a common enough facet of contemporary art, and certainly of contemporary photography, Grill's relation to this trend is largely deceptive. Pictures that lack the subjects we normally associate with aesthetic experience may be de rigueur among today's artists, but pictures that avoid pointing to that lack—as a subject in itself—are more rare. Grill belongs in this latter, more elusive camp. His subjects—staid, average, unremarkable—do not so much congratulate us on our ability to aestheticize those things we might normally condemn as “banal,” as make us doubt our use of the term in the first place, to describe anything. Artist Robert Irwin said, “Seeing is forgetting the name of the thing one sees,” and John Cage suggested that “If something is boring after two minutes, try it for four;”<sup>1</sup> two statements that could serve equally well as introductions to Grill's work.

*Sponge Composition*, a diminutive work from 2005, demonstrates this way of seeing. On first glance we seem to comprehend the limits of the picture's content. A light blue cellulose sponge sits atop a dust-strewn section of similarly colored concrete. What looks like daylight hits the sponge from the left, and a



Mike Grill, *Sponge Composition*, 2005. Inkjet print, 36 x 46 cm.  
Courtesy the artist and Jeffrey Boone Gallery, Vancouver

scattering of small objects (a chunk of curled plastic, some flecks of dried paint, a small piece of knotted twine) lie scattered nearby. The primary aesthetic effect of the whole seems to reside in the very close tonal and chromatic relationships between the sponge and the concrete, the one seeming to morph slowly into the other. But prolonged attention to the image yields more. What initially seemed to be an unmodulated ground is actually awash in stains and spillages, their flattened patterns surrounding and encasing the sponge as if in the suspended liquid of a microscope slide. The curled bodies of several deceased pill bugs, or “roly-polys,” lie camouflaged among these patterns, their minute forms barely large enough to cast a shadow. In the lower left of the frame, an ambiguous rectangular shape (that might be the edge of a concrete support) confounds our initial impression of the picture as a flat field of action, its presence echoed by a similarly perplexing wedge-like object (that could be a bicycle part) in the frame’s upper right.

Most interesting of all, the sponge is flanked by two extremely transitory and ephemeral traces of itself. To the left, an “imprint” of its former resting place on the concrete (the sponge has recently been moved, possibly by the photographer himself) and to the right, its own sharply delineated shadow. The imprint is, in essence, a fragile form of photogram (a photographic image made without the use of a lens) and will exist only briefly before being re-absorbed into the surrounding texture of its environment. The shadow will remain visible for an even shorter period of time, gradually elongating over the course of the day until the sunlight that makes its existence possible disappears from view and it too fades back into its ground.

While these last two elements of Grill’s work may be elegant proof of his self-reflexivity as an artist working within photography, they have the potential to foreclose our experience of the pictures themselves—the temptation being to label Grill as yet another artist making “photography about photography,” and to then hunt diligently through the rest of his oeuvre for telling visual correspondences between his subject matter and the photographic process. (To stop looking at the work, in other words, and to start requisitioning it.) Grill thwarts this process by taking shrewd advantage of the disruptive possibilities

<sup>1</sup>“In Zen they say: If something is boring after two minutes, try it for four. If still boring, try it for eight, sixteen, thirty-two, and so on. Eventually one discovers that it’s not boring but very interesting” Richard Kostelanetz, *John Cage (ex)plain(ed)*, (Farmington Hills, MI: Schirmer Books, 1996), 21.

offered up by his camera's inability to see "in the round," corralling his three-dimensional subjects into perplexingly ambiguous two-dimensional relationships that are then fixed by the camera in a state of perpetual fragmentation. As Grill states, these fixed relationships

... stick, like a thorn in the eye, frustrating the wish to see or to rest the eye on the harmonious artwork. They are a constant distraction from the logical space of the picture. This dynamism, however, is what allows the picture to achieve a kind of life or form of its own, something that articulates the dead space of the picture and makes it come alive or go beyond the ability of the viewer to fix permanently upon it. This is not the metaphysical beyond. This is the very physical thing that can't be gotten beyond. This is the point when the imagination appears to lose its freedom. When the imagination is confronted by something that goes beyond it, imagination then jumps over its own limit by representing to itself the inaccessibility of the idea, and by making this very inaccessibility something that is present and sensible in nature. It is what I would call a picture's visual language, or for lack of a better term, its spirit.

In Grill's newest photographs, a suite of thirteen black and white images taken on Vancouver's North Shore, the manicured greenery of the city's suburban neighbourhoods (hedges, lawns, ornamentals,) the omnipresent "natural" growth of its coastal mountains (Douglas fir, Western Red cedars), and the numerous roadways connecting the two are juxtaposed to subtle effect. In an uncharacteristic move, Grill has grouped ten of these images together into a single work, simply entitled *North Shore*. The middle-to-far distance of these pictures is claimed by the dense coniferous forests of the North Shore mountains, while the foreground plays stage to a variety of private and civic landscaping efforts. A modest stand of bamboo emerges from beneath a group of low-hanging power cables to make its way cautiously out onto a residential street. The brutally topped limbs of an ailing fruit tree explode with defiant shoots of new growth. An immense, manicured cyprus hedge runs like a retaining wall through two adjacent properties, blocking neighbour from neighbour. To all appearances, these juxtapositions are not employed as stepping stones to allegory, symbolism or social critique, but simply *pictured*, as things in themselves.<sup>2</sup>

For viewers accustomed to an unrelenting “rhetoric of purposefulness”<sup>3</sup> in their contemporary art, the large amount of space allotted here for individual interpretation may be cause for consternation. But as in all of Grill’s work, our initial impression will expand significantly upon prolonged viewing (what Ed Ruscha called the *Huh? Wow!* art experience, as opposed to the more ubiquitous *Wow! Huh?*)<sup>4</sup> leading us away from that which we thought we knew by way of the very objects we thought most knowable.<sup>5</sup>

In *Hedgerow*, the largest of the new works, the scattered subjects of *North Shore* are compressed into a singular image of dense formal complexity. Six young cedars, each about five feet high, are huddled together on the periphery of a cleared lot. To their left is the bulldozed root system of an older tree, and to their right a single pine, partially concealed by mounds of piled up earth. Further back, beyond the lot’s perimeter, are several two-story buildings typical of a light industrial zone, and in the far distance, the snow capped peaks of the Pacific Range.

The presence of the young cedars is perplexing. How long have they been here? The weeds at their base suggest that they are not new arrivals, yet the trees are still young. If they are remnants of a former development, why have they been so carefully avoided by the demolition process? If they are the beginning of a new development, why are there no further signs of activity on the lot—no cement mixers, no construction tape? What, exactly, are they doing here? The question nags, as does Grill’s spatial positioning of the trees themselves.

Immediately in front of the cedars is a small boulder whose shape and tonality (the bright midday sun makes it appear pure white) is clearly echoed by two similarly-sized slabs of white wall on the buildings in the middle distance, the three points

<sup>2</sup>“That the subject is called banal, because it is judged on the idea that it is ordinary, is a problem for people who think that the higher can only be experienced through the extraordinary or the meaningful, and, as well, for those apologists who because of their fetish for meaning claim that the ordinary is really extraordinary as a way to find meaning in the everyday. The extraordinary is all around us. It’s just that, in the end, it’s not very extraordinary. Most of the time a thing, really is just a thing. As Beckett said, ‘no symbols where none intended.’” Mike Grill in correspondence with the author, 2009.

<sup>3</sup>“‘High Art’ photography, good or bad, generally invokes a rhetoric of purposefulness, of *use*, as ruthless (and self-justifying) as advertising’s or journalism’s. Each image its own exit strategy, moving you along.” Peter Culley, “Evan Lee’s Elective Affinities,” *Evan Lee Captures* (Vancouver: Presentation House Gallery, 2006), 17.

<sup>4</sup>Dave Hickey, *Air Guitar* (Los Angeles, CA: Art Issues Press, 1997), 62.

<sup>5</sup>Contrast this with the experiential *retraction* that occurs in the viewing of much current large-format colour photography. An initial jolt of scale, colour and tactility, followed by rapidly diminishing returns and the depressing realization that the picture’s instantaneous spectacularity may have constituted the full extent of the photographer’s ambition.

forming a triangular perimeter which contains the cedars, pine, and uprooted tree. Grill flattens the considerable distances contained within this perimeter by placing near and far into problematic relationships with one another that many photographers would simply read as “wrong.”<sup>6</sup> In Grill’s two-dimensional reading of the scene, the tops of the two cedars on the right merge helplessly with the birch trees at the rear of the lot, while the distant pine, because of its precarious contact with the cedars at far right, projects forward in space, becoming, in essence, “one of the group.” The tip of the tallest plant intrudes messily into the monochrome-like purity of the cloudless sky, and its point-of-entry becomes a distractive element to the eye, which returns to it again and again in hope of resolution—the repeated failure of which compels a more prolonged engagement with the work itself.

In his willful disruption of such elements, Grill recognizes, and subverts, the limits of his chosen medium. He knows that the three-dimensional world he aims his camera at will not survive the journey into two dimensions, that it will become something much smaller, more compromised and contingent. This irretrievable loss cuts across the entire spectrum of photographic reproduction, and is just as true of the grainy twilight exposures of Robert Frank as it is the macroscopic enlargements of Thomas Ruff. Within this apparent weakness lies one of the medium’s most irreducible, and least understood strengths. In his newest work, Grill demonstrates a profound understanding of the possibilities inherent in this paradox.

<sup>6</sup> John Baldessari famously lampooned this conservative tendency in his photo-canvas *Wrong*, in which the artist is seen proudly breaking the established rules of “good” picture making by posing directly in front of palm tree, which appears to grow directly out of his head.



Mike Grill, *North Shore*, 2008. Inkjet prints, 27.9 x 35.6 cm, Courtesy the artist and Jeffrey Boone Gallery, Vancouver



**DAN SINEY**

**LEE HENDERSON / Stump Skulls**

Every major forest, every massive multi-country forest in the world shows terrible scars from human contact, and each forest is scarred in a different pattern, by a different style of clearcut. Dan Siney's series of photographs, *Stump Skulls*, depicts the pattern of the clearcut of west coast rainforests on the face of an individual stump. We think of deforestation on the scale of hectares. However, Siney focuses on the singular. The eye-holes in his photographs were made by nineteenth century loggers puncturing old growth cedars to secure the springboards where they stood while felling the tree above. Siney has photographed the features of these old ghosts in old growth stumps near Moodyville, one of the more prosperous lumber towns on the west coast in the nineteenth century. More than a hundred years later, all that remains of BC's rainforests is scarred, undead. Politics and business define the clearcut's form, and a country's clearcuts follow a pattern.

*Veins.* The northern half of the Democratic Republic of Congo protects the last of Africa's primeval rainforest, and from high above the ground, with the whole body of the rainforest in your sights, the patterns of clearcut in the Congo look like thick varicose veins, or the veiny patterns of craquelure that form in dry oil paint that has been too close to the heat and too long in the sun.

*Bones.* Across the Atlantic, the Amazon rainforest in Brazil has clearcut scars that have been described as looking like the pattern of *fishbone*, they also look like the antennae on a hairy insect or the antennae on the tops of houses for tv reception. The clearcut pattern is a zipper, a skeletal cage, a scaffold.

*Skin.* British Columbia's clearcuts spot the province like someone with a terrible skin disease, a severe staph infection or malignant discolouration. The surface looks like it's being eaten alive. The forests of BC were once a vast living organism. Now the entire coastal forest is perforated and gridlined and riddled with hideous bald patches. Half the forest is gone, but from the sky, it still looks green through a pattern of holes, like a sponge. The checkerboard pattern is touted as ethical silviculture for a sustainable forestry practice, and this has spread down the entire Continental Divide.

*Eyes.* The photographer is looking for eyes. He is looking for the world's ineluctable reflections of himself, of his people, the eyes of today and of the past.

Deep in the forest he finds them. Dead-eye binoculars looking out at him from the stumps of history. They are damaged goods. Like many of his subjects, Siney's view of the forest is sympathetic to scars. In his *Standing Forest After The Rain*, the sun breaks through the canopy and its light seems to be caught in a thousand beads along the fanning branches of a falling spruce. Each little drop of sun is the glowing cocoon of a tent caterpillar larvae that has spread its webs over the tree as thickly as cancer across a lung, devouring the leaves and bark as worm, and when it awakens as moth, it will defoliate whatever of the tree is left behind.

In nature and in the city, Siney is after an illusory sense of the spontaneous. Siney's grainy naturalism shows forests to be less intact, less pristine, breaking up and being dispersed. He photographs change. His pictures always look for the dying part of us. A soulful loneliness in the forest and social anomie in the city. His pictures of people show scenes of unrest and random acts of flagrant self-expression—like the lumberjacks implied in his stump skulls and the radiant caterpillars in his forest. In many of his portraits of artists, punks, hobos, and outsiders, it will be a single pungent detail that immediately catches the eye, whether it's an open wound or physical scars, and subtly, after that, you begin to see the social pattern his subjects inhabit. They are often familiar enough city people, unhealthy and androgynous, a complex weave of weakness, honesty, suspicion, mindfulness, and dysfunction.

Often in Siney's photographs there is an implied yearning for the *return-to-nature*, even in the most extremely city moments. A picture of a vase of daffodils is presented under the flashbulb of a camera going off inside the backseat of a sedan, or twentysomethings literally naked in the woods with bows and arrows, or leaping out of lakes or walking through steam, or tossing up a pile of leaves or feathers. The concept of scarification has historically been part of many cultures' coming-of-age rituals, and the punk nuts and bolts pierced through the flesh of Siney's younger subjects are reminiscent of the stump skulls as well, as though the camera's eye was looking through these holes to find the human condition.

Our demand for lumber is one thing, the icon of the lumberjack is another. Besides the power of big business, there is the irascible genius of the lumberjack to consider. The identity of the lumberjack is tied to his nineteenth century roots as an antisocial creature, a private man isolated from the boons and boondoggles of proper society. Ironically, he has more in common with the forest. He is a

hero to capitalism, because he is on the very breach of the vanguard, forging new territories for big business, and in his wake, new land for the open market. The lumberjack is a drug dealer feeding us our own death, and in his mind, he is more sympathetically bonded to the tree than the user. He is emphatically not a paper-pusher. The lumberjack of yesteryear, the woodsmen who encountered the forests of British Columbia in their prime, these were volatile men with anarchic instincts, that is to say, slightly feral, lovers of liberty, personal strength, survivalism, individuality, and raw isolation from society. The chaos of the natural world suits the lumberjack, he hears the ghosts of the world howling clearer than all the little twitters of civilization. How do you tell a man he can no longer stand on the skull of the world?



Dan Siney, *Stump Skull 2* and *Stump Skull 3*, 2008, C-prints, 152 x 102 cm. Courtesy the artist

**JEREMY SHAW**

**CHRISTOPHER OLSON / xSALADxDAYSx**

Straight Edge is a curious and contentious arm of the punk subculture. Similar in decibels if not aesthetics and approach, the demanding and oft-maligned jock faction of hardcore exists with its own tribal codes of conduct and dress, dance moves, and sectarian infighting.

For those unfamiliar, a quick history lesson: Straight Edge started back in the early 1980s. Washington DC hardcore legends Minor Threat penned a song called “Straight Edge,” laying out a refusal to smoke, do drugs or drink based on one’s own personal choice as a reaction to punk rock’s nihilistic and self-destructive stereotypes. Little did Ian Mackaye know what his song would give birth to. His lyrics and the practice of underage kids marking an X on the back of their hands to get into hardcore shows at bars mutated over time into a movement, adopting a uniform sound, wolfpack mentality and ideological sub-sects, carrying with it the enduring “X” as its emblem.<sup>1</sup>

For the record, I never got into Straight Edge. I spent my formative years involved in the political hardcore scene, where Straight Edge’s increasingly puritanical zealots were seen as villains.<sup>2</sup> It’s funny now, upon reflection since the battlecry of “The Personal is Political” within activist circles encompassed a cloying sense of inadequacy similar to Straight Edge: a perpetual guilt-trip in that no matter what one does, someone is being oppressed, and it’s you, by extension, who is to blame. Like straight-edge, it was a scene that depended on youth’s black-and-white passion, rooted more in peer pressure than personal choice and clumsy-but-earnest attempts at self-definition, fostering a conformity and yearning for acceptance that was part of the continuum of growing up.

<sup>1</sup>Fast-forward a few years to Boston and New York City where bands like SSD, Slapshot, Youth of Today, and Judge pushed Straight-Edge as an ethos along with a uniform sound and look, the bands and fans sporting X’ed-up hands, cropped hair and athletic clothes with band logos rendered in Varsity fonts. There was a “True til Death” wolfpack mentality at work, where meathead antics were legitimized as being part of a “Crew”: a tight posse with a common cultural and ethical focus that stood in opposition to what they considered mainstream culture. Combined with a later emphasis on vegetarianism and then adopting veganism, Straight Edge eventually gave rise to its own micro-bandwagons: influential Edge musicians like Youth of Today’s Ray Cappo and John Porcell went the way of Krishna-Consciousness, while a more militant offshoot known as Hardline developed through bands like Vegan Reich, Raid, and most notoriously, Earth Crisis.

<sup>2</sup>Embodied by “Hardline,” a sometimes violent sect in the ’90s that combined strict veganism, anti-sex, pro-life, and homophobic stances along with appropriated bad-ass eco-warrior imagery à la Earth First and the Animal Liberation Front into a threatening, albeit alienating and comical tough-guy image.

My own history was the initial pull while watching Jeremy Shaw's *Best Minds Part One* (2007). In it, looped footage of teenagers rocking out to a straight-edge hardcore band at North Van's Seylynn Hall is slowed down to a crawl, accompanied by an ambient soundtrack. Simple on the surface, disparate symbols of youth culture are brought together. In this case, a title nicked from Allen Ginsberg's *Howl*, folded into Straight Edge morality and all-ages culture, while rooted in a definite sense of place: specifically, North Vancouver's Seylynn Hall, a volunteer-run, all-ages venue which was an important fixture in the Metro Vancouver counterculture scene.<sup>3</sup> The accompanying soundscape was inspired by William Basinski's landmark audio piece, *The Disintegration Loops I-IV*, where old reel-to-reel analogue tape loops play themselves out to their end: magnetic particles fall off with every rotation, and the sound decays in real time to create one of the saddest pieces of music you'll ever hear.



In the past, Shaw has created work with a direct interest in altered states and expanded consciousness,<sup>4</sup> whether by hallucinogens or transcendental meditation. There is *DMT* (2004), an eight-channel video installation of twentysomethings tripping out and afterwards trying to describe the great mystic ineffable, his recent works like *This Transition Will Never End* (2008) that recombines the fractal psych-out tunnel-ride sequences of Hollywood films with the relatively new aesthetic of the screensaver, remixing the idiomatic visual language of psychedelia in pop culture in pieces such as *Anti-Psych (Total Black Light)* (2005), and his own electronic shoegazer pop music as Circlesquare, steeped in party/rave culture references (his most recent release is 2009's *More*

<sup>3</sup>For myself and my friends who never leave East Van, all-ages shows in North Van, Abbotsford, and Surrey (and even Salt Spring Island) became much-anticipated excursions, bringing together people from different areas of the region under the banner of our chosen genres.

<sup>4</sup>In an electrobeat.net interview, Shaw said that he discovered meditation via David Lynch and spoke about how it's next to impossible to describe it without using default flakey New-Agey terms. Similar to his subjects trying to describe a DMT trip.

*Songs about Dancing and Drugs*). Turning the lens on to the teetotalling wing of the punk subculture points towards the artist's larger strategy.

Watching straight-edge kids dance is a sight to behold. Different than your average mosh pit, space gets cleared like a breakdance circle and kids take turns throwing aggressive moves resembling Capoeira and kickboxing. Their arms and legs flail in windmills and roundhouse kicks as they shadowbox invisible enemies. It's a macho (alpha-) male form of physical expression, providing a form of cathartic release with all of the fireball energy that young hormones can muster. Slowed down and presented in a gallery space, however, the band's volume and fury is muted and replaced with Shaw's own sombre music loop; the imagery on display opens up to a number of associations, especially visions of other dances.

A disco ball's points of light play the role of supporting actor in Shaw's piece, summoning anecdotes and grainy footage of pre-and post-backlash disco: the Black and Latino gay community partying at David Mancuso's Loft, or Larry Levan DJing at the Paradise Garage.<sup>5</sup> It brought to mind British artist Mark Leckey's 1999 video essay *Fiorucci Made Me Hardcore* that has been described as an "extended paean to the unadulterated bliss of nocturnal abandon"<sup>6</sup> recombining found footage of Northern Soul all-nighters in Britain, and laser and strobe-lit ravers in their 4 AM reveries, evoking the Shakers and Sufi mystics, but in a space fragmented by coloured gels and fog machines, the rotating disco ball presiding over the rite.

Shaw seems aware of this history, with a disco ball's points of light casting less of a judgmental eye on the seemingly-violent dancers, but rather presiding over them with the fragmentation of space, pointing instead towards the ecstatic. As above, the collective abandon of the dance floor is rite of passage set in physical motion. In hardcore terms: boy goes in, thrashes around, and comes out with a shiner as a badge of initiation. We may not have the sociological structure that demands we physically go into the woods alone to confront our inner Darth Vader, (armed with faith, a gram of 'shrooms, appropriated Buddhist/First Nations spirituality, all of the above) and while hardcore and house music may

<sup>5</sup> See: Bill Brewster and Frank Broughton's book *Last Night a DJ Saved My Life: The History of the Disc Jockey* (Grove Press, 2000) and Josell Ramos' documentary film *Maestro* (2003).

<sup>6</sup> Matthew Higgs, "Openings," *Artforum* 40.86 (April 2002): 128-29.



Jeremy Shaw  
*Best Minds Part One*, 2007. Looped DVD projection, sound (stills)  
Courtesy the artist and Blanket Gallery, Vancouver

be worlds apart in form and look, they share the common bond of release: transformation found in physical strain and neurochemistry, under flashing coloured gels and the spin of a disco ball.

The transcendental experience is inward and private, but can be equally as intense in a social, communal setting when the volume is just right—it's a space for a larger, archetypal unity to reveal itself, a gateway to a collective, even cosmic, consciousness, regardless of genre lines. Alan Watts' "Joyous Cosmology" can be found not just in a tab of acid but in mosh pits and yoga class, hippy drum jams, dancing to techno til dawn, or structured by youth gangs, frats, and their jumping-in/hazing ceremonies. Shaw's "chopped and screwed"<sup>7</sup> manipulations of image and sound point towards the mythopoetic, quasi-religious territory of anthropologist Joseph Campbell revealing the porous line between individual and collective consciousness. There's the commonality of fun in the video, but beneath that, there's individual release and displays of tribal affiliation and prowess. Part-ego, part-subconscious mating ritual, there's a thin line between showing off your boss moves and private exorcism.

Shaw explores these altered states through time-based media techniques. One can see this thread running through works like *7 Minutes* (1995/2002), another slo-mo home-video. Here, two girls getting into a scrap at a house party plays against a Circlesquare tune acting like an inverted rock video, a voyeuristic, stoner take on adolescence. In *DMT*, his friends subject themselves not only to psychedelic cowboy Terrence McKenna's psycho-shamanistic entheogen of choice but to the video camera and their own descriptive faculties. In both, observations of (post-) adolescent life and its rites and the recreational/shamanic psychedelic headspace are recombined. Similarly, in *Best Minds Part Two*, he runs the ecstatic high of the dance and subcultural signifiers through the filter of time-based media effects (a slow motion, endless loop with ambient music) into a mercurial combination of the pop-poetics of MTV, experimental cinema, and new media presented in the white cube.

*Best Minds Part One* initially comes off as ironic with the straight-edge fury rendered soft and poetic, and simultaneously elegiac like its namesake, documenting fleeting youth. The Edge kids may not be of the "destroyed, naked

<sup>7</sup> Check: a particular subset of rap culture where, armed with codeine-laced cough syrup, beats and rhymes are re-mixed pitched down and slurred, into a drowsy stoned haze.

stark raving hysterical etc” sort (yet) but he documents their adherence to their tribe, a snapshot of their good ol’ days, a testament to virility—and belief systems—that can wane as time goes on. One of the key details in the video is—and it happens too quickly at regular speed, as Shaw knows—these kids are rocking out so hard that they’re getting high. Like any peak experience, he illustrates the rickety bridge between language (both spoken and visual) and the lived moment, and the spectator is powerless to live what is represented in the artwork. The mediated image can only take you so far: the songs can only be about dancing and drugs, unless you happen to be shaking it and/or tripping while listening to them, emphasizing that the dross of everyday life is married to a need to transcend it, and the means to catapult oneself over that barrier takes on many different forms, regardless of morality.



Jeremy Shaw, *Best Minds Part One*, 2007  
Looped DVD projection, sound, (installation view)  
Courtesy the artist and Blanket Gallery, Vancouver  
Photo: Dennis Kulpas





Erik Hood, *Rocky's Ditch*, Mosquito Creek Park, 2009

## JIM BREUKELMAN

### STEPHEN MILLER / Tooth and Claw

When you look at Jim Breukelman's images, taken at North Shore Paintball, it's easy to see a crazy parody of combat and to register the destructive joy written in the infinite splats of colour and worn paths—the palimpsest of thousands of mock battles fought in the woods.

An “extreme sport,” they call it. If they say so, I guess I can buy into that, but paintball is surely a way to get your killer ya-yas out safely. There is nothing that focuses the mind more than a little danger, real or simulated. There's no talk, no negotiation, no hmmm . . . let's take lunch and think about it. There's only your body, your weapon, the stealthy tricks you've learned from the movies, and hopefully some mates to hammer down a little covering fire.

And in the end, it's all up to you, big guy/gal. You've got that gun in your hand, your heart is beating and no matter how much you repeat that it's just pretend, your stomach churns and you have to fight the temptation to raise your head and look around. See that tree covered with a million shots of crusted paint? There's no safety behind that tree. Trying for that tree is a kid's mistake; you're too big. Besides, you can't get to that tree or that stack of tires. But you can't stay where you are without getting laced; you have to move because they are coming for you.

As a highly evolved primate you already know how to do this. You understand camo, you've seen plenty of gunslinging on TV. The craft of combat is basic on a cellular level, and you wouldn't be here

today if somewhere in your junk DNA you hadn't descended from winners.

And that's what Jim Breukelman is showing us. The choice. Life or Death. Seen sharply as only a negative the size of a dinner plate can serve up.

We're all living in an emergency or at least a rehearsal for an emergency. No. It's not a real war. Sure, it's only an enactment, it's only a *photograph of the aftermath* of an enactment, only an *idea* or a *memory*, but look again: see those places where frantic running boots have stumbled and churned the soil into orange mud? You can fall there. In the extreme sport of life you have to attack with caution. After all you can get lost in this forest of images, trip over the tangled roots, and fall down dead. This is where old radials go to die, a retirement home for scrabbly plywood sheets and cargo pallets, for hanging shrouds of canvas. Those are the sucker's refuge, and you can see when someone's there. The fabric sways, moving like the breath of a ghost.

Knowing how to hide is just as important as knowing how to shoot, but don't get fooled into thinking survival is easy. In the fog of war, or the fog of life, there are just too many leaves to decode, too many tactical options, too many branches that fork, and fork, and fork again. There's no time for second guessing and theoretical analysis. Faced with existence or extinction, you dodge and duck the issues of the day, but the battlefield is all there is, and the only solutions you come up with amount

to shoulda-coulda versions of the way you wished you'd lived but haven't.

So as you search for the enemy, or yourself, in these photographs, don't forget about that other you, the one with the gun, trying to read your mind, aiming at the place where your fear is rooted. If you stare into these photographs long enough, there's the vertigo of encountering yourself as a time-traveller. You see the strategies and tactics as they play out in this forest, and you start accumulating a sense of what's really at stake here . . .

And this is what we see—the infinite details of these places within places; a pillbox in a forest, a distant railroad-siding seen through the trees, a tribe of gamers with weapons at the ready. An Afghan vet, or a Gulf War vet, or a Congolese child soldier might point out that real bullets would zip right through those tacked-up forts and you'd be bleeding out and calling for your mama. We've globalized the killing fields. Sure, you can wonder if the paint leaches into the soil, hell it probably does, of course it does. All this is ruining the planet, everything we do is ruining the planet, and if there's a point, maybe that's as good as any.<sup>1</sup>

Yes, there is beauty on the battlefield. So is this

mock beauty? Whether our existence is a horror show or a fun show, a game show or a freak show, maybe later we'll realize that there once was something beautiful there, no matter how degraded. There is that gossamer bridge over Lynn Creek, away from the heat of the battle. There is the factory or the silo or whatever the hell it is, full of fleshless industrial intent. A plumbed and veined monster in the woods—are we waiting in the treeline to attack or is it creeping upslope toward us?

When push comes to shove it won't matter who is doing the searching or what is being destroyed. All those questions will be answered on the tombstone of our species. What Jim Breukelman is putting before us is a vision. A space in the woods, a purpose-built kingdom, a place to be all we can be even if we're just parachuting in for the day. It's aimed right at you: those colours on the trees, that stain on the grass, those chain-sawn un-barked poles, the living green of the leaves, the electric blue, the lemon yellow, the craters of red and pink and white, the shadows and the light, the confusion of the branches, the sharp rock, the bruise on your shin, the blood on your lip, an idea devoid of bullshit, hitting you smack in the eye.

<sup>1</sup> Hi Steve, I don't know if this is even relevant to your essay or not. I have been told that paintballs contain harmless stuff such as food dye and vegetable oil. The skin is made of gelatin. Apparently this paint can be washed off with soap and water if you do this soon enough. In my experience, it smells more like regular paint than vegetable oil. I haven't bothered to give it the taste test because the guy at our local wine shop tells me I have an uncomplicated palate, unable to detect subtleties. All I know is that it is very sticky and has a strong smell. Jim



116 Pages 116 - 119: Jim Breukelman, *Paintball Landscape Series #1, #3, #18, #17*, 2008, Chromogenic print on Kodak Endura Paper, 126 x 150 cm. Courtesy the artist and Republic Gallery, Vancouver







**BABAK GOLKAR**

**ANNETTE HURTIG / House of Sulphur: An Extended Dérive**

Artist Babak Golkar is a Canadian of Persian ancestry whose life has been shaped by geographic and cultural displacements following relocations from the USA to Iran, and from Iran to Vancouver. Born in Berkeley, California to Iranian parents, Golkar returned with them to Tehran when he was less than a year old. He was raised in Tehran, and then immigrated to Canada at the age of nineteen. He speaks Farsi and unaccented fluent Canadian English, and lives in an area in North Vancouver called Little Persia. Not surprisingly then he easily takes on various guises for this project. Elusive identities are central to *Deriv(e)*, the *House of Sulphur's* video component. Within the video the artist is heard but not seen. Golkar's disembodied presence, like that of the drivers featured in the video, signifies the experiences of anonymity and invisibility shared by immigrants. In each of his encounters with five cab drivers of various backgrounds, we register the import and implications of ethnic and cultural derivations. Golkar's ethnicity is evident to his fellow Iranians, but for the other drivers it is indefinable or unimportant.

The title of the video, *Deriv(e)*, plays on and with Guy Debord's "Theory of the Dérive." Debord's theory was a manifesto of sorts for the Situationist International, a radical 1960s movement that critiqued capitalism and consumer culture and aimed to resist the hegemonic production and control of social space. In its noun and its verb form, *dérive* signifies something similar to the English word *drift*: a *dérive* involves human motion and takes place in social space; to *dérive* is to move through a social space mapping "fleeting impressions" of an urban terrain viscerally encountered.<sup>1</sup>

Golkar's "objective passional terrain" in *Deriv(e)* and in the *House of Sulphur* project is his own extended neighbourhood plus his and others' derivations. His spatial driftings during taxi rides and his conceptual driftings in conversations with the drivers begin from or end at either his home in North Vancouver or at Presentation House. Golkar investigates the histories and experiences of his subjects who, like him, are immigrants. During the artist's encounters with each driver we discover their unique but inter-related personal "psycho-geographies." Travelling by taxi, traversing North and West Vancouver and, in one instance,

riding westward from these municipalities to the Ferry Terminal at Horseshoe Bay, filming the passing scenery through the windshield, an unseen Babak Golkar assumes a slightly different identity for each drive and each driver. “Fleeting impressions” accumulate during consecutive drifts during which Golkar engages his drivers in conversation, soliciting their histories and their commentary on the social spaces through which they travel. Two drivers hail from Iran, two from India, one from the Caribbean. All are immigrants to Canada, and of course, each has a unique story to tell.

The *House of Suphur*'s three inter-related components include the video; a series of five chalk drawings, each related to a particular taxi ride; and a partial resurfacing of Presentation House, the North Vancouver building where the work is displayed in the *Moodyville* exhibition.<sup>2</sup> With two components within the premises of Presentation House Gallery and the third element on the building's exterior, we cannot view all three elements simultaneously. We see parts, never the whole. The viewer's passage from inside to outside the building, the project's various media and forms, and its spatial and conceptual movements combine in an extended Situationist-style *dérive*, a drift from one form to another, from site to site, impression to impression, from one social space and “psycho-geography” into others. The project's geographic “passional terrain” stretches across the attenuated contiguous urban development of Burrard Inlet's North Shore; its psychological territory, more difficult to define, proceeds from the subjects, including the artist himself.

<sup>1</sup> “In a *dérive* one or more persons during a certain period drop their relations, their work and leisure activities, and all their other usual motives for movement and action, and let themselves be drawn by the attractions of the terrain and the encounters they find there. Chance is a less important factor in this activity than one might think: from a *dérive* point of view cities have psycho-geographical contours, with constant currents, fixed points and vortexes that strongly discourage entry into or exit from certain zones. . . . The ecological analysis of the absolute or relative character of fissures in the urban network, of the role of microclimates, of distinct neighborhoods with no relation to administrative boundaries, and above all of the dominating action of centers of attraction, must be utilized and completed by psycho-geographical methods. The objective passional terrain of the *dérive* must be defined in accordance both with its own logic and with its relations with social morphology.”

“*Théorie de la dérive*” was published in *Internationale Situationniste* #2 (Paris, December 1958). A slightly different version was published in the Belgian surrealist journal *Les Lèvres Nues* #9 (November 1956) along with accounts of two *dérives*. This excerpt is from a translation by Ken Knabb, *Situationist International Anthology* (revised and expanded edition, 2006).

<sup>2</sup> Presentation House is currently home to Presentation House Gallery, Presentation House Theatre, and the North Vancouver Museum and Archives.

*House of Sulphur's* hour and a quarter of looped and partially subtitled video footage plays continuously on a small wall-mounted flat-screen monitor within Presentation House Gallery. During a portion of the video, an English translation of a conversation spoken in Farsi appears in luminous yellow subtitles. The colour of these subtitles echoes the yellow line bisecting the wall behind the video screen, a line like those dividing roads and highways.

The video is accompanied by five drawings made with yellow schoolroom chalk. Each of the drawings represents an aspect of a “psycho-geography” disclosed and explored by a cab driver featured in *Deriv(e)*. The drawings include a monochrome or colour-field titled *Sulphur Mountain*, a silhouette of a Lamborgini sports car titled *A Lamborgini for Iqbal*, a silhouette of a man titled *Self Portrait as a Doctor*, an abstract composition comprised of two yellow arrowheads (like those that identify the BC Binning Residence, which figures in the video) titled *After, After BC Binning House*. The fifth drawing, called *House of Sulphur*, depicts Presentation House in profile. The yellow in these drawings and within the exhibition space recalls the partial resurfacing of the exterior of Presentation House itself. The repeated title *House of Sulphur* combined with the yellow of the five monochrome drawings, the line on the gallery wall, and the chalk covering the building's exterior, call to mind the two numinous sulphur piles that indelibly mark the shores of North Vancouver. Babak Golkar calls them sulphur mountains.

These sulphur piles sit on the north shore of Burrard Inlet between the two major bridges linking the North Shore with Vancouver. Massive and luminous, the sulphur piles are visible from downtown Vancouver and from much further afield, reputedly from satellites orbiting in space. Icons of North Vancouver, their mass ascends higher than any surrounding architectural structure. They are landmarks within the harbour and evidence of ongoing industrial activities within an exquisite and once pristine setting. *House of Sulphur's* repeated references to these sulphur piles evoke the history of their location, Moodyville, where the founding economy was based on natural resource extraction.

They also bring to mind Jerry Pethick's fascination with these giant yellow masses and his various uses of the material, particularly his use of sulphur to represent illumination, light, and sunlight. Golkar's references to the sulphur piles situate his project in a specific time and locale and unites its various

components—literally (by colour coding them), figuratively (with a metaphoric thread that maps the projects’ drifts from terrain to terrain), and conceptually (as a way of signifying continuous and embricated thematic concerns).

The yellow chalk applied to specific exterior surfaces of Presentation House makes the building appear, from a certain perspective, to emit the same sunny glow as the sulphur piles: the structure seems transformed into a house of sulphur. This treatment gives Golkar’s project its title. In an extended performance (a collaborative “drawing” accomplished with the participation of students from Emily Carr University of Art and Design) chalk was applied only to those surfaces of the building that are visible from the 7-Eleven store across the street. When closely inspected, it is obvious that only some of the edifice’s surfaces are transformed—as if the building has been prepared for a photo session or is in use as a film set. In addition to citing Greater Vancouver’s current designation as Hollywood North, or Brollywood, the surface treatment of the heritage-designated house produces a three-quarter view and thus a reference to perspective and photography. This manufactured image speaks to questions of artifice and authenticity, to the possibility of multiple truths and various simultaneous or consecutive appearances. Which takes us back to Golkar’s assumed identities and the cab drivers differing perspectives. The alteration to the building’s exterior—its public face—also emphatically differentiates its current public usages and identity (and its exterior) from its previous private (and interior) aspects. The abstracted drawings are reductions of the artist’s encounters with the individual cab drivers, souvenirs of those experiences, reminders of the dynamics between the cab’s interior (where the interlocutors are heard but unseen) and the passing landscape outside, the site of the cultural invisibility of the immigrant taxi drivers and the artist.

The project’s repeated use of the colour yellow—with its references to the sulphur mountains but also to the painted lines on streets and roads, lines that connect the recorded conversations between the interrogating artist and his taxi driver subjects—alludes to and acknowledges pedagogy, research, the import and unavoidability of history and the past, the potency of a *dérive*. The footage of visits to and conversations about specific sites—for instance, the affluence of the neighbourhood in which the BC Binning Residence is located and the harsh conditions on a First Nations Reserve—are exemplary of the wide spectrum of

present social, economic and cultural conditions and the dramatic differences between everyday lives within a locale.

*House of Sulphur's* various components manifest the artist's objective yet passionate research into his own derivations—the sources of his sense of self, his history, but also his current interests and the derivations of the places in which he drifts; also, the histories and experiences of his interlocutors, the taxi drivers, who initially present their public personae but drift occasionally, when encouraged and engaged by Golkar, into more intimate reveries and disclosures. These various derivations are the source for the title *Deriv(e)*, which in the alliteration also suggests the *drives* (noun and verb) which take us into a “passional terrain” and toward a “psycho-geographical” understanding of urban experience.









## SHARLA SAVA / “Igniting the mercurial”: A Conversation about North Vancouver Culture

SABINE BITTER is an artist who lives and works in Vancouver and Vienna; JEFF DERKSEN is a writer and Assistant Professor, Department of English, Simon Fraser University; FRANCIS MANSBRIDGE is a writer who worked for many years as an archivist at the North Vancouver Museum and Archives; REID SHIER is Director of Presentation House Gallery; and JERRY ZASLOVE is Professor Emeritus, English and Humanities, Simon Fraser University. We met in Sabine and Jeff’s studio in February 2009 to talk about possibilities for culture in North Vancouver. What follows is our wide-ranging conversation about art, architecture, archives, and urban planning.

**REID SHIER** When we are talking about cultural models, outside of very dense urban cores—it’s one thing to talk about models we are all familiar with but another to talk about the context of North Vancouver in particular. North Vancouver is an old city that wasn’t always the suburb it is now.

**FRANCIS MANSBRIDGE** It is interesting that it grew up as a group of different towns or villages. You had Deep Cove, which was listed separately in the directories for a long time, not even part of North Vancouver. And you had Moodyville. And you had Lynn Valley. And you had Lonsdale. And these had post offices, and you had to send your mail to the region—you didn’t mail to North Vancouver. This has probably affected its development and its current state.

**SHARLA SAVA** When did the name “Moodyville” fall out of use?

**FM** Quite early. The mill at Moodyville closed down by about 1900, and after that the centre of activity shifted to Lower Lonsdale. Beyond that time Moodyville ceased to exist as a separate community.

**JERRY ZASLOVE** That was an imaginary boundary? It didn’t have political significance, is that right?

**FM** No political significance, like where does Kitsilano end . . .

**RS** For me it raises a really interesting question—a paradox around what Presentation House Gallery is and what it offers, presumably to a community,



and by extension what the communities in North Van are. The decision about living and working in two spaces is true for all the people working at the Gallery because we all live in Vancouver. A lot of our “community,” the people who come to see the shows, live in Vancouver or elsewhere. There is a lingering desire to name the audience of the Gallery that impacts us, and is at the root of a (perhaps misplaced or self-imposed) perception of our placelessness in North Van, and who and for whom we operate.

**FM** I wonder if this is changing at all with the huge increase of people in the Lower Lonsdale area. It seems to me this is a very different group of people than have traditionally been North Vancouver residents. I imagine they work in Vancouver.

**RS** I believe for the majority of those in Lower Lonsdale, as it is for many throughout North Van, the city is a bedroom community. People commute to Vancouver, and then return home at night.

**JZ** There is an influx of immigrants—Iranian, Philipino, Asian. A lot of people working in the hospital try to live in North Van but they can't because it's too expensive. When I'm driving east across the bridge, I'm always wondering who are all these people, going to North Van?

**JEFF DERKSEN** I guess it depends on how you think of the role of the institution, gallery, or museum. Does it plan its programming to reflect existing or imagined communities, or is it a site that produces communities? If it produces communities, then it has the potential of producing counter-communities. Or it can be beyond the boundary of the site, because the relationship between the centre and periphery of the city is changing quite a bit with the notion of the exurb, or the aerosol city, with the edges bleeding out.

**JZ** That's why I call it a gateway or threshold community—a conceptual name, to give the setting a sense of transience, and moving back and forth through the doors of a place where geography is the fate of the territory.

**RS** This is something that weaves us together with the civic protest around development in Lower Lonsdale and the galvanizing nature of a cultural institution. The idea of Lower Lonsdale as a gateway—there is a resident population, but we are talking about it as one that commutes out, so there is little current sense of an urban core. Politically there is a desire to form Lower Lonsdale into an urban centre, to position it as a node where there is activity night and day. One of the reasons Millennium Development's large condo towers were green-lighted was to gain kick-back money to fund social and cultural institutions, which would then form the nexus of the city.

**FM** “Bonusing” is the word they like to use.

**RS** That's what we were part of, a bonusing situation that instead galvanized a number of community members against what needed to happen in order to fund us. The Catch-22 is that what you need in order to create a community is sensed by some as the thing that will destroy the community. So my question is what is Lower Lonsdale? To us it has always been the dream of forming a cultural institution in this area in order to help build a point of contact and destination rather than of flow-through. But right now few cities, North Vancouver included, have the money to build this type of infrastructure. The tool they do have is bonus amenity agreements.

**JD** This is also one of the paradoxes between culture and urban planning at the moment. Culture is seen as the fix or problem-solving aspect for urban problems, and yet there is a reluctance to actually fund cultural institutions that would shape the urban territory. So culture gets seen as a cheap way of solving urban problems. The “creative city” that Richard Florida talks about is a neoliberal dream of using culture not to solve urban problems but to make culture central to the gentrification process. So on the one hand you have the struggle of the gallery to produce or reflect communities, on the other hand you have an urban planning impulse that pushes the gallery or institution towards the production of an urban space that is more based on consumption and real estate. In effect, the “creative cities” model represents everything that we, within cultural institutions, tend to resist. So that seems to be the tension—on the one hand the centrality of

culture to urban planning, and then on the other a resistance to the possibilities of culture.

**FM** There's been an ongoing drive to establish a museum down at the waterfront, in the old shipyard lands there. Unlike archives which are specific to a community, museums are generally not. It was felt there was just not enough North Vancouver to make a good museum. So the intent has been to move the Maritime Museum over there. Again there's not enough money, at least in the community's view, and not enough federal money either.

**SABINE BITTER** I think it's actually interesting to think about who the public is for these museums. We no longer believe that there is one singular public that we have to serve, but rather the idea of various segmented and fractured publics. The Shedhalle in Zurich is one example of how institutions understand themselves to serve very specific and individual publics, immigration groups, unemployed youth—and do more project-based works with them. Another interesting model was the Rooseum in Malmö, which Charles Esche describes as a space of “democratic deviance” and a mix of community centre, club, academy and showroom. So on the one hand these institutions act extremely locally, they serve a very specific community, and on the other hand, they are linked to other institutions that identify with a similar profile. I think it is interesting that you can work with or engage with these different scales: not to imagine one audience located in North Vancouver, but produce different publics by linking with other institutions (like No One Is Illegal, other cultural institutions, universities, etc), and their publics, through related projects.

**FM** The only way that North Van can have a major cultural venue is by having people come in from elsewhere.

**JZ** But what are they bringing in when they come from elsewhere, and what are they taking back? In terms of the indigenous art gallery, I think Presentation House Gallery is an absolute hub for that kind of crossroads that has ultimately a political significance. Whereas the Maritime Museum is very different. It is a tourist attraction, as well as housing archives.

**SS** What about architecture? Does this have any relation to the way that we interact with these places?

**SB** One of the times that I got very excited about North Vancouver was when I

first arrived here. The longest trip I took was when I looked for the original site of the first Arthur Erickson house [the 1963 David Graham house]. To me it was strange that the possible demolition of the house didn't have an impact on public discourse. Architecture doesn't get a lot of public attention.

**JZ** Architecture in North Vancouver doesn't get discussed. The high-rises being built down there are just ugly buildings. What do you think about the new library?

**RS** The scale is small, and I'm sure there's a question about how it will serve the city over time—but the library is far and above what else is here. Perhaps my view is coloured by the constraints of the Gallery, and how difficult I find it is to have a conversation about architectural possibilities. I am interested in talking about what limits there are in terms of being able to develop architecture, given the existing hodge-podge, zoning bylaws, and the fact, as Sabine was saying, that it's about money. If a significant piece of architecture must be destroyed for the chance to build a much larger house, then there is little question about how the decision will go. In this context, to build a cultural institution, or something of perceived civic "value"—social housing, or some other such benefit—it is understood that it has its best chance through a developer getting extra density and therefore a higher investment return. There is no current strategy—or more accurately no tax base—to provide for landmark architecture or civic amenities.

**FM** We [the North Vancouver Museum and Archives] moved from Presentation House to new facilities about three years ago. There was a fortunate combination of circumstances that encouraged the district to renovate the old 1920s Lynn Valley School for as much as it would have cost to build a new building, over 4.4 million dollars. It's a really splendid facility for an archive. But museums and archives need to get out of the building and into the community. Not many people will come in when it is out of the way, up there. You get a lot more contact by going to shopping malls.

**SB** But it's not always the locale—many places in Europe are really off-centre, and people travel there, it's actually exciting to travel, to be a part of it.

**RS** Is that willingness to travel a difference between a European audience and a North American one?

**JZ** Yes, I think so. The centralisation and monopolisation of culture in North American cities is based on where the universities or museums are, and where



Above: Jim Breukelman, *PacifiCat #29*, 2000  
Chromogenic print on Kodak Endura Paper, 126 x 150 cm. Courtesy the artist and Republic Gallery, Vancouver

Below: Dominion Photo Co., *Wallace Shipyards, Yard #2*, July 19, 1916, [NVMA 4938]

the marketplace is—the symphony, the philanthropic milieu—and there is a hospital, and all that. The cathedral and the bastille are part of the city in Europe, but there are other cathedrals outside of the centre, so people get used to travelling around.

**JD** I just wanted to return to the discussion of architecture as a public discourse in Vancouver. Can we talk about the public sphere in Vancouver, or is that a fiction because what we are really dealing with is actually public/private space? And what kind of publics can an institution produce, or engage with, in this context? It seems that the cultural institutions are not meant to reflect or serve the public—and its diverse communities—so much as to enhance, or “bonus,” public/private space. So how do we imagine a public function for institutions? It seems to me there is a time lag. We have an imagined sense of an existing public, and the institutional problem is then how to get them to come to the place, whether North Van, Surrey, or Burnaby, which have all had interesting and progressive programming for decades. How do we engage with different publics? This recalls the conundrum of Canadian multiculturalism too.

**JZ** You can also add to public/private space the notion of “intimate space,” which I think the Gallery provides. I think of it as “mercurian space”—that place where nomads and unemployed and pilgrims and artists and intelligentsia mix up and come together around objective, created culture. The overwhelming nature of public/private space buries this, and it isn’t able to express itself, in a Georg Simmel way as a place in the metropolis. And that’s why I thought that Presentation House Gallery needed as much space as possible, in Lower Lonsdale, in order to allow for the creation of intimate, mercurian spaces. It is the mercurian space that criticizes the public/private, and gives you alternative public spheres.

**JD** That could be the central focus of an institution, to ask how you ignite the mercurial, or create intimate spaces. If you think about how neoliberalism seeps down into our most intimate relationships, having the gallery become an intimate space allows for a redistribution of even those sensibilities. It’s an exciting idea.

**RS** We can think specifically about how that occurs in Lower Lonsdale, which is an accretion of different types of spaces. Today Lower Lonsdale is a burgeoning residential area, but not so long ago it was a heavy industrial space, and it is

also crossed with pockets of light industry and commercial space. There are all these different kinds of development, layered one on top of another, and the conceptual idea of a cultural institution within it has a galvanizing potential as a space of interaction. This is hard to site. I would like to see it right on the waterfront. The location I have in mind has many possible uses—park, parking lot, residence, shop. There are strong voices in the city that see this site as necessarily one that must include retail and commerce, as its potential for revenue-generation offsets the cost of building anything there.

**JZ** Is Lower Lonsdale a marketplace?

**RS** Currently I see Lower Lonsdale as a place where you are *en route*, going to or from home. It's not an agora, it's a place that pushes people away or invites you to travel through. It is a thorough-fare, a conduit, and not a destination.

**FM** There were so many things that could have been done. They had an agreement to use some of the old shipyard buildings for some commercial purpose, but they were left so long, about ten years, that they were destroyed by weather. That is unfortunate, that the buildings were lost.

**RS** I really think the location we're at right now is just crippling the Gallery.

**SB** How so?

**RS** Well, you know, that three-block walk—

**SS** It's a steep hill! Not only is it three blocks, but it's three blocks up.

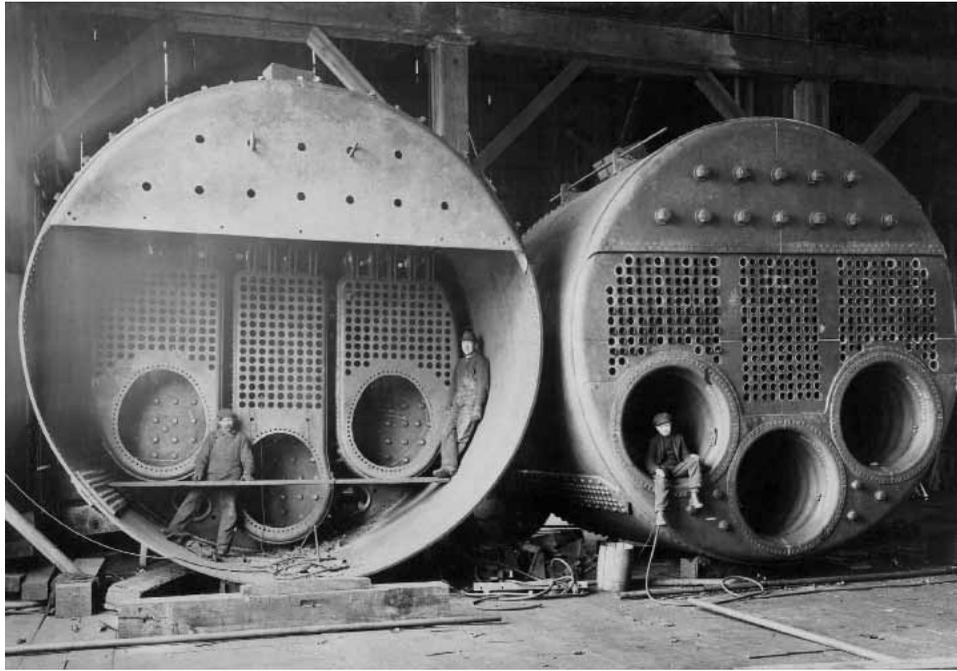
**RS** But more than that though, it's about being part of something. There's little there other than a 7-Eleven and residences. You don't get a sense of it being part of any kind of urban fabric or dialogue. Unless we imagine the Gallery at the top of Grouse Mountain, or somewhere as a unique destination point . . . I think it's vital to be part of something.

**SS** Well, you're part of a bunch of houses and apartments. It's *something*.

**JZ** I walk by it all the time, but that's because I live there. It's not a typical kind of a walk. I like to do it, I like to walk this route. I get off the SeaBus, walk back up, try to find a different way within the city. . . . So there never was any thought about moving up higher, for you [PHG]?

**RS** Like Upper Lonsdale? Up the mountain?

**JZ** Upper Lonsdale, centre city . . . . Did it ever come up?



136 Top: *Ships' Boilers*, 1918. Collection North Vancouver Museum & Archives [15684]

Bottom: Leonard Frank, *Imperial Press Conference Members on a Logging Train*, 1919. 20 x 25 cm Vancouver Public Library, Special Collections, [5950]

RS We had some preliminary conversation about the Extra Foods site at Lonsdale and 16th but again this returns us to discussions about a bonus amenity situation. Without a major philanthropist with very deep pockets, there are few conversations about new space possible for a cultural institution of our scale that are not about attaching ourselves to an urban development. Unfortunately, in this latter context amenities get harnessed to the developers' needs. Social and cultural issues are conflated with the development, and the public sees them as an either/or—*If you kill it, you kill this*. We were perceived that way as part of Millennium's proposal. I find it's part of the political reality—we have to entertain every option we have. At the same time, I think the application of bonus amenities is troubling. It's a well-intentioned idea with often divisive consequences.

JZ Right, I agree.

RS One of these is how it absolves both cities and taxpayers of obligations to things they have responsibility for, and that they should exercise leadership over and make an argument for. Perhaps it's always been the case, but the developer can appear as the city's giver and destroyer.

FM If there are bylaws against or for something, I mean, why then allow them to do things that would've been against the bylaws, like putting in less parking or more storeys . . . ?

JZ And this was the argument that we, at the Lonsdale Citizens' Association, made. The very one that you just said: that the bonus amenity clause is the foot in the door for developers. When they produced the new Official Community Plan, they had already, in a futuristic way, lined Lonsdale with high-rises. They are futurists without imagination.

JD What's kind of amazing to me is that when we sit and talk about culture, the function of a cultural institution in North Vancouver or any other kind of expanded metropolitan area, is that in a way we've become, by necessity, urban planning critics. Reid and I have known each other for a long time, we've moved through the artist-run centre movement—so you go from being an artist to an organizer to a curator—and then somehow years later you end up being involved in urban planning.

JZ The same thing happened to me, but it happened in a slightly different way. You're at home, in a Bakhtinian way, and then all of a sudden you realize that the

language that you speak, the vernacular you speak, in your work world is affected by the space that you live in. Then you become an anti-capitalist, by definition, and the city becomes a symbol for a settlement and functions like a language.

**JD** This is what's interesting about Moodyville—as you move away from making things, the economy shifts towards insurance, investment, real estate, tourism and it draws culture into that as part of its productive engine. And the role given to culture is that of holding onto the past—the Maritime Museum would be something that does this—it shows that things *used* to be made in this area. One function for Presentation House Gallery could be to connect to the diverse, particularized communities in North Vancouver. I think what Sabine's pointing out is that the step that got skipped over is architecture. That architecture as a public discourse got skipped over, so that instead of talking about an imagined architectural space that would work for Presentation House Gallery, we end up talking about Loblaws and the bonusing of that space.

**SS** And it's continuous with what was brought up earlier, with Richard Florida—this is just a small part of a larger claim of the “creative cities” and “creative clusters” approach to urban planning, where creativity is seen as the source of technological progress, innovation, and the transition to a viable postindustrial economy. So we can study how city councils have embraced and integrated the principles of knowledge and creativity into their urban planning. The recent, and much celebrated, cultural renaissance in Toronto is such a great example. The irony, of course, is that they are so inseparably bound to public/private development models that they overlook the pre-existing fabric of creative urban communities.

**JZ** I see this as a problem of Vancouver, not of North Vancouver which wants to mirror Vancouver.

**JD** Or we could say it's a problem of globalized cities. It's not a unique paradigm.

**RS** But what is a city council to do in a situation where they would otherwise never be able to build these things? Politicians are in no-win situations.

**FM** I think part of it might go back, too, to what happened when the federal government managed to get this huge budget surplus. They did it on the backs of the provinces and especially the municipalities. The municipalities are being asked to do more than they really can afford.

**RS** They're caught in a very difficult situation and they're trying to use what means they have.

**FM** I think North Vancouver is even more fragmented than some of the other Lower Mainland communities. You have these groups that are almost self-contained . . .

**RS** There is another city there, underneath that city, which is the Squamish Nation, that has historically been ignored in all of this planning. This is now changing, but it has been true in the past. They sit side by side—these two cities, in fact these two nations. It's another country, when you drive through Squamish lands, you are not in North Vancouver.

**SB** I would also ask what are the cultural strategies to deal with these conditions? In Europe, some institutions in the last years just closed down, at least for a specific time period. They said, well, no more exhibitions, no more representation—some of them rented out their spaces to finance other projects with that—and instead they organized conferences, workshops and symposia to work in a more discursive way. The point is to find cultural strategies to create a condition where you can actually create new possibilities. This could be a move from “presentation” to production, or from fixed spaces to temporal situations.

**JZ** But Presentation House Gallery already has this—their identity is defined by presenting photographic work . . .

**RS** I don't think the mandate is about photography, the mandate is about the way the world can be represented through photography and the ways that artists use photography. I mean, I think photography is the least interesting thing about photography.

**JZ** Well we can agree about that—that's why the shows there have been so interesting.

**RS** One of the core values of the Gallery is the way one puts contemporary practices in juxtaposition and in dialogue with historical ones, the way that photography allows a certain possibility in that regard.

**SS** Is there some way in which what Presentation House Gallery stands for could turn into a more experimental architecture? Something that is more flexible in terms of not having a single site but multiple sites, or taking over, or inhabiting . . . or would that be inconsistent with how you understand it or with what purpose it's serving now?

**RS** Well, practically, if we're showing photographs, one thing we have to do is be able to provide a secure environment. That's a necessity, I think, if we're to support and maintain the mandate. But to me the Gallery is not necessarily a site of presentation: it's a site of production—a site of the production of a dialogue about history and the intersection of historical and contemporary culture.

**JD** What's ironic is that what's hidden in the city are all the former sites where things were made, all the former sites of production. The city's greatest intensification of urban development and gentrification is precisely in the areas that used to make things—Coal Harbour, Moodyville, False Creek. You could say the erasing of the history of the working class on the waterfront, displaced through the class project of gentrification, is most intense in these areas. I know when Sabine first came to Vancouver, one way we decided to get a sense of the area was to drive the waterfront as long as possible, so through the North Shore, linking up over into Surrey, New Westminister, through those productive and former productive spaces on the waterfront.

**JZ** It's different from San Francisco in terms of the working class, or even Seattle with the Wobblies and the Scandinavian community. We had our riots but what's



interesting in Vancouver is that you turn your back on history. And you're also turning your back on the wilderness. So you're huddled in this place, at the edge. It's an inland waterway, a fictional coast city.

**JD** This gets to Reid's point about the overlapping of First Nations as a separate nation within the urban territory. Unless you have a sense of social justice and actually address land claims and political organizing, then your project *has* to turn away from history—otherwise you have to address inequities in the present. In a funny way Vancouver gets involved in the production of an imagined history of itself, after having already stripped away, let's say, actually existing history. Rem Koolhaas has a nice essay where he talks about the idea of a “generic city.” For him, the generic city is a city that strips away its history and then starts an industry to replace the history that it stripped away. And that seems to me to be part of the process that Vancouver is involved in. And I think the kind of tepid public art that we see is often trying to produce a sense of history to replace an actual investigation into a material history that is there. For instance, there is a public artwork in Coal Harbour that takes the only lyrical lines from the Earle Birney poem, “November Walk Near False Creek Mouth” and memorializes them on a wall of falling water and with a lone figure hovering above. The actual poem is a harsh and funny critique of Vancouver as a colonial city and its imagination of itself as a peripheral city, as well as an early critique of Vancouver's use of nature, but the artwork makes the poem a generic lyric excerpt.

**RS** Well, Canada's always been very good at erasing its own history. That's certainly been its project. More specifically, I think, Vancouver, or the *success* of Vancouver if you want to call it that, has been its ability to erase certain histories. So you have Expo 86 which just levels the ground of what was there, and then that's leveled, and now we have a new, wholly conceived and completely engineered city, from the bottom up, and it looks, for all intents and purposes, like it's always been there. Condominiums have erased the light industrial history that preceded them, which had, in turn, erased the native history that was there before it. So Vancouver's radical ability to reinvent itself through total erasure is strong. North Vancouver doesn't quite have that rapaciousness, so you get these overlaps of different histories that exist as a kind of palimpsest, on top of one another.

**FM** There is perhaps still an opportunity to do a lot of things there...

**RS** Well, you get to *see* it all. You get to see the Squamish Nation, which is there,

right next to the industrial shipyards which are derelict but still *there*, next to, you know, this kind of weird '70s idea of architecture with the ICBC building next to Lonsdale Quay which is still there, next to all these new condo towers. It's all just layered together.

**SB** Before I came to Vancouver, I knew lots about these things through contemporary artwork—through Jeff Wall, of course, and then Ken Lum's idea of multiculturalism and Stan Douglas's representation of social housing and colonialism in relation to the First Nations people. We talked about that in Vienna because those works were very present. So many of these things you describe I've heard about through contemporary art production, which has been internationally incredibly important.

**JD** We tend to denigrate our own localness as mere localness in that way, I think.

**JZ** But I don't believe in "localness."

**RS** Presentation House was perhaps a more internationally-oriented gallery ten or fifteen years ago than it is now. I mean, we're still doing lots of exhibitions with international artists, but we're also doing—well, as part of my directorship, I'm interested in the local in a very strong way.

**JZ** You're redefining the local—to mean something more than simply a heritage museum. Presentation House Gallery, and the artists that you're talking about, have redefined the local.

**SB** Well, the city almost became a brand within the art market . . .

**RS** I would be hesitant to conflate all those practices, as I think there are a number of different approaches to ideas of the local in Vancouver. For some, Vancouver could be any place—it just happens to be Vancouver. For other artists Vancouver is more central, as are its histories. In the dialogue that we're having about the impact of internationalist practices, coming back into a local context—going out in the world and then coming back . . . what does that mean for us? How does it change our perception of the local to see a Jeff Wall image in Frankfurt? What is it to see the Georgia Viaduct in a German museum?

**JZ** It's an alienation effect intrinsic to not defining the local.

**RS** It gives the local new meaning for me. I'm interested in the hybridity of North Vancouver. You know, the awful mishmash of things—I think it offers possibility, a kind of productive confusion.

**SB** Yes, there is the industrial side, as well as houses that are architectural jewels, or potential case study houses, and the Iranian community. Just all these components provide a fantastic condition for site-specific projects with and around these sites and communities.

**RS** Jerry, I'm interested in your conceptualization of the local. What is your idea of the local?

**JZ** The local, I would describe as situational. There should be a sense of how an event is situated, specific to the local.

**RS** Yeah, I guess I'm also thinking of it in a larger context—I'm trying to understand the potential of a gallery such as Presentation House within a place like North Vancouver. In this city there are many different things sitting on top of one other without much intercourse between them. I've started to see the potential of that disjunctiveness more as one of possibility than I had before. So I guess my question about the local was . . . is the local a cohesive thing? Or is it a schismatic, screwed-up thing?

**JZ** Given the time and place we are in historically, with neoliberalism, capitalism, the market expansion into culture, I would say that we're talking about an incommensurable concept of the local. That precisely because it can't be clearly defined, it needs to operate at the borders of those incommensurable conflicts that come up in the city and that artists are particularly good at showing or that curators can actually bring out. So we're not talking about a homogenous community.

**JD** I think the local can simultaneously be cohesive—be the experience of cohesiveness—while at the same time the shape of the local is scaled throughout the globe. Decisions that shape the local can be made elsewhere. Global networks of developers and financiers are making decisions elsewhere that are absolutely shaping the local. What happens is the local can be maintained as a cohesive experience by people who live and produce it, but it's fragmented by how the decisions shaping the local are made. So you have a loss of local control over the planning of it, but at the same time you still have an intense localness. And I think our experience of localness is that we can actually take in that complexity of scales.

**JZ** We agree about that. But a place for art is a shelter, an ideological shelter.

**JD** And this for me is the fascinating tension, because we say that art, in a sense, seeks an institutional shelter or a degree of distance from the economic, let's say—

it seeks a critical space. It seems to be the central curatorial problem—how do you handle that relation between critical distance and the centrality of culture as an urban plan? And then the aesthetic question is, how do we handle that in terms of how we imagine culture spatially? The kind of uneven development of North Vancouver that we’re talking about, and the fragmented spaces and the layering of different histories and the way that that’s visible through the types of architecture and the way that communities interact. . . . actually that site, as Reid pointed out, becomes a site of real potential. In a sense, how does the uneven space of North Vancouver open possibilities and make these processes, which are often invisible, visible?

**SS** Reid, you were talking earlier about the bonusing situation that PHG was engaged with—and I am trying to think about this in relation to the current financial situation, to the massive economic disruptions of the past year. Do you think that the neoliberal paradigm is changed now that it has shifted? Are we going to look back one day and think about the bonusing of culture as *the good old days* of neoliberal opportunity?

**JD** I think it’s a mistake to think that the neoliberal period is over . . .

**RS** I would agree with that. We may have taken a little bit of a break.

**JD** Well, also, neoliberalism narrativizes itself always as crises and breaks—so to see the crisis and the break as the end of it, I think, doesn’t allow a kind of clarity. What I’ve been trying to do is separate the economic, governmental aspect of neoliberalism from the cultural policy aspects of it. So you suddenly had this great cry from Thomas Friedman and through every other influential economic commentator who has a public voice, saying that neoliberalism is over, its economic policy is over. But at the same time, the intensity of the cultural project of neoliberalism continues, and that’s precisely around the inability of people to imagine citizenship that is anything other than individual, or to imagine themselves being part of a larger collectivity—of course I’m exaggerating in a way, but notions of collectivity have been fundamentally cracked and made suspicious through neoliberalism. In “the long neoliberal moment” the question is how do you produce an understanding of publicness in an era when the cultural dominant has been to break down the social and the cultural to the individual? And not only that—that was the Thatcherite program—but then to ignite competition between individuals. So for me that raises a cultural project, one that tries to counter that tendency.

**RS** I think why I raised the issue of community to begin with—what it does perhaps provide is a way to dismantle that idea of the gallery, or of culture, as being part of a civic or urban locus. What the gallery can be is a much more mobile place *of* community. This gets back to the core function of the gallery—as a site of production and presentation, a site of dialogue. It's not contingent on architecture, it's more of an intellectual architecture.

**JZ** In a hierarchy of goods, education for and about the local is a real good.

**SB** To me it's also interesting that in exactly these spaces where you have a generation that has never experienced security, and who cannot move freely, you can have a very critical art scene. For instance, I have been working over the last years in Serbia, working on projects in Belgrade—and it's the most amazing, critical engaged art scene. Some of the people are so young that they cannot even really remember what it means to be secure—they were five years old when Milosevic came into power. But it's interesting because there are all these cultural collectives, and they're very culturally, even globally, networked: they just know how to move around Europe despite the visa and money problems. Of course, when they go to Germany and Austria they're not treated as Europeans, but . . .

**JZ** But the cultural underground is there. I mean in terms of cultural mobility, in terms of imaginary worlds: they know the world of art and film and music.

**SB** There's this group of artists who are very clear that they are East Europeans, that they are not sharing a notion of Europeans as we—in the sense of Middle Europe that was promoted culturally—reference Europeans. Neoliberalism, feminism, urbanism, gentrification, immigration and borders—those are the main issues being talked about in their cultural production.

**JZ** These are different histories and conflicting histories of modernity. What's missing here, in the cohort of two generations of students that I see—going back to what Jeff said before, here the controversies aren't real, or they're gone, or they're fleeting. The issues don't last. I'm enough of a historical materialist to say that if the controversies aren't grounded in experience and in the institutions that have affected us, they're not going to have any meaning. You don't even see them.

**SB** Every time I go over the Lions Gate Bridge, I always think it is strange that the actual conflict of the First Nations, spatial and cultural, is not actually visible. I realize of course that it is different, but it is not like in Belgrade, where the

Roma settlement is also situated under a bridge. The conditions of looking at the settlements in a distant way are similar, but unlike in Belgrade, here the conflict isn't as public.

**JZ** It's a peaceful settlement here because of the legal working out of land claims.

**SB** But there's a conflictual relation there still today, no?

**RS** Part of that sense of absence is not so much about that history not being there, but our ability to look past it and erase it at the same time.

**FM** The First Nations people have their own archives, and they have made a very conscious decision—most of the First Nations people, or at least in BC—not to give their materials to provincial institutions.

**RS** But is it also that the significance of those objects has a different cultural resonance for First Nations communities? Those objects have a different function within a very different situation.

**JZ** There's a different kind of conservation and preservation of historical memory in documents, from the point of view of oral cultures, and so on. My point is about the mobility of capital, and that now capital is stuck, and that institutions become more and more ideologically rigid, in order to preserve what they represent and protect. But when everything becomes ideological it's impossible to break it apart into historical material.

**RS** It's difficult to look at it freshly.

**JZ** That's the form of the commodity—it becomes dead. It can function only as a commodity and be exchanged in terms of whatever possibilities there are for that commodity to transform itself into something else . . .

**RS** I think that's why photography is so infinitely inventible—its ability to upset our best efforts to turn it into a commodity . . . prints are *sold*—but the reproducibility of photographs—more so now with digital technologies—allows a kind of latent, irreducible “newness.”



Keith Nahanee, *Ceremonial Blanket*, 2004, (detail) wool, 2 x 1.2 m



## Into the Continuum: Squamish Nation Powwow, North Vancouver, July 2008

*We dance at the powwow because it is enjoyable to do so, but more importantly because to dance makes the earth go around. We follow the earth's path, imitating her orbit and thus we are part of that movement. Because we are part of the movement of the earth our stopping would have the effect of ending the earth's path also. We are all connected after all.*

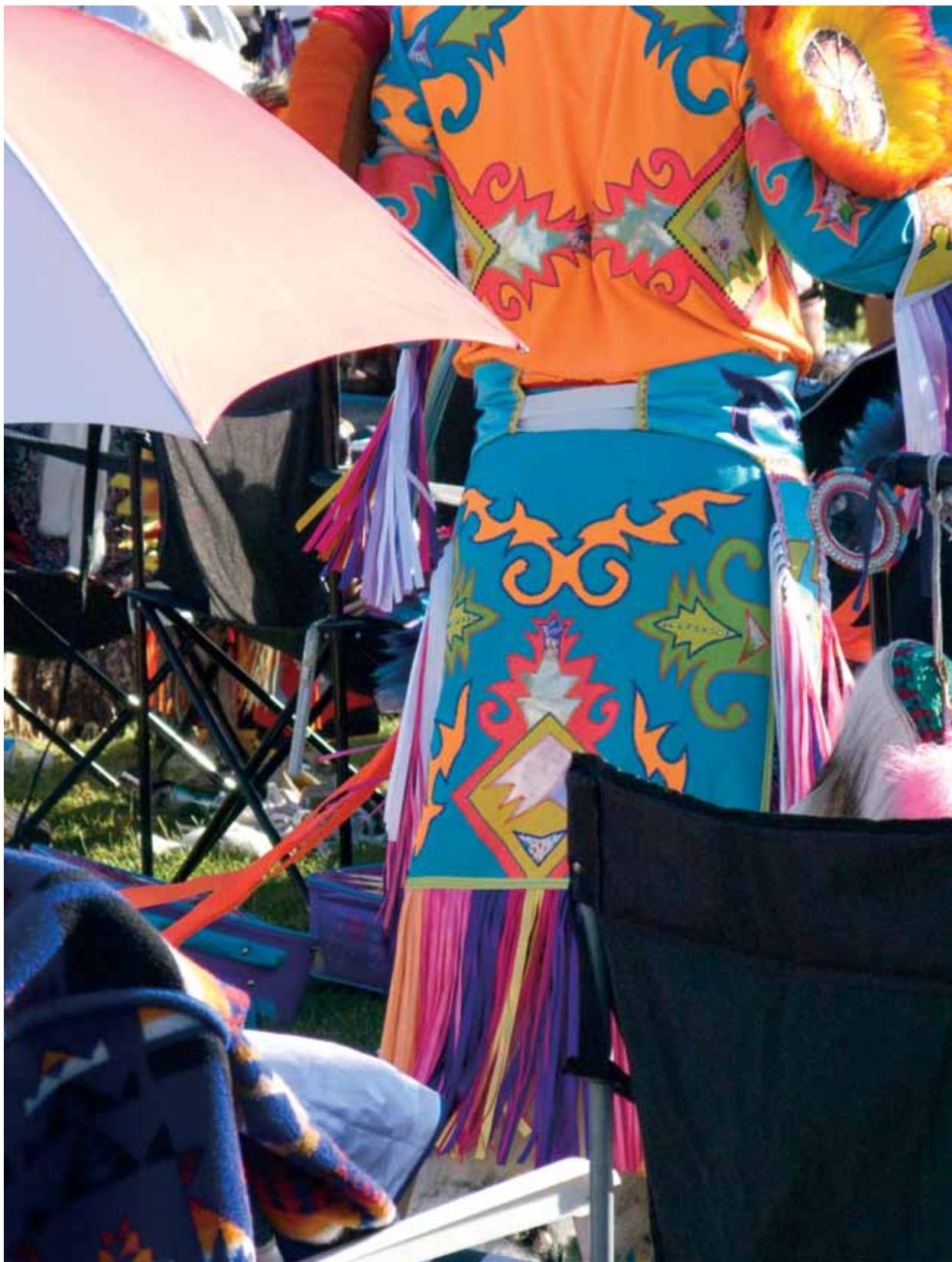
Steven and Gwen Point, Sto:Lo Nation

Powwows were held by the Squamish Nation in North Vancouver during the 1940s and 1950s. Organized with flair (and an abiding sense of cultural purpose) by the late Chief Simon Baker (*Khot La Cha*), these celebrations of dancing, drumming, and singing lasted for ten days; they were occasions for gathering First Nations participants and visitors from across British Columbia (as well as people from Saskatchewan, Alberta, and Montana). Commenting on this period of optimism and vitality, Squamish National educator Gloria Nahanee (*Tenálh*) observes: "The elders passed on and everything stopped; after 1958 the powwows disappeared for thirty years. The culture died down for a while."<sup>1</sup>

In 1988, the Squamish Nation Powwow was reinstated, under Gloria Nahanee's leadership (and with the loyal support of her husband, Keith Nahanee, and her two daughters, Kanoni and Riannon). From her life-long perspective: "Dance has led the way to our culture being revived." For as she recalls, "The old spirits told me they wanted the powwow revived and that our young children would carry this on." Her husband, speaking as a longstanding cultural worker and powwow advocate for youth, comments, accordingly: "I think of the eagles and the hawks, the swans. The spirits of those birds live on in the feathers that we wear. They carry us and help us to be light and our spirits to be light. They say that because the eagle flies the highest, it carries our thoughts and our prayers to the Creator. They say that the Creator would send back his visions for us of the things that we need to carry us in life. He would send the dreams, the visions that give us our beadwork and show us how to make our regalia, show us what we should wear, the colours and designs that are all a part of us."

<sup>1</sup>All quotations drawn from Kay Johnston and Gloria Nahanee, *Spirit of Powwow* (Vancouver: Hancock House, 2003).





## ROBERT KLEYN / Proving Ground for Modernity

*Each epoch not only dreams the next, but also, in dreaming, strives toward the moment of waking. It bears its end in itself and unfolds it cunningly.*

Walter Benjamin, "Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century"

From the mid-1940s through the early 1960s, North Vancouver hosted a series of remarkable architectural experiments. Working from a few pre-war examples, a handful of young architects drafted rules for a new architecture to address the pressing concerns of the post-war era: a social commitment to housing; a regionalist response to design, material and site; and a truly modern built form. Why these "experimental houses" sprang up in North Vancouver has more to do with the historical specificity of the city rather than with the climate, landscape, and abundant wood—the influences usually held to have shaped the "West Coast" style.

Recognition of the importance of the West Coast style came early. Already in 1955, the popular press had declared BC building to be the most advanced in Canada, due to "the softer climate of the Pacific Coast . . . the influence of the best in American house design . . . and the abundant supply of wood."<sup>1</sup> If the BC coast was the place for modernism, the North Shore was the favoured site. Bound by waterfront on one side, mountains on the other, south-facing and sylvan, it was relatively inexpensive and free of the regulations that constrained the Vancouver it overlooked.

The conditions of building in North Vancouver encouraged experiment: first, a pioneering history of independent and individualist projects; second, an abundance of inexpensive building sites; third, the absence of a regular grid due to the topography. General historical, social, and technological factors also played a part: the postwar demilitarization of industry made wartime skills and technologies available plus the reintegration of veterans intensified wartime housing shortages. During the war, the federal government had built several new neighbourhoods to house shipyard workers, but the "rows and rows of shabbily built wooden boxes" were thought inadequate for veterans.<sup>2</sup> The shipbuilding industry kept the city of North Vancouver a predominantly blue-collar community rather

<sup>1</sup> *Canadian Homes and Gardens*, Oct. 1955.

<sup>2</sup> Warren Sommer, *The Ambitious City: A History of the City of North Vancouver* (Madeira Park, BC: Harbour Publishing, 2007), 197.

September 1962 25 cents

# Western Homes

and LIVING



The Irwin Hoffmans at home • All about doors, doorways, and door hardware • Seven steps to a successful lawn • Douglas Lake road

MR. T. A. GUNN  
215 WEST 13TH AVE.  
VANCOUVER 9, B.C.  
V-1  
SEP 30 1962

Cover of *Western Homes and Living*, September 1962. Photo: Selwyn Pullan.  
"The Hoffmans at Home: The world of music sets the theme for the West Coast home of two famous artists, symphony director Irwin Hoffman and concert violinist Esther Glazer."

than the middle-class paradise of the developers' visions, limiting speculation and keeping property values down. Large tracts of land were made available, subdivided into small lots that could be bought by individual builders and architects; for example, Capilano Highlands, originally developed in the 1938 as a complete community in the garden city tradition, is home to numerous of the Neoteric houses designed by architect Fred Hollingsworth as low-cost "starter homes." Many of those trying on new models of inhabitation were progressive thinkers for whom the post-war period represented a new beginning. A history of failed and grandiose schemes such as the 1906 Grand Boulevard development and the 1920s Rosemont subdivision, plus an abundant supply of vacant and bucolic sites, made North Vancouver an ideal testing ground for modernist style. Largely because of lower property values, the younger architects, just making their way up or starting their own firms (Fred Hollingsworth, Ron Thom, Ronald Nairne, etc.) chose North Vancouver for their own houses; the senior partners with deeper pockets preferred West Van (McNabb) or Vancouver's west side (Van Norman, Pratt, Thornton). Clients for these houses, mostly middle class professionals and artists, reflected the social milieu in which architects operated. Coincidentally, North Van was still home to a vital squatter community and thus was already witness to the principal contradiction of modern urbanism—custom built houses for well-off, and improvised dwellings for the poor and marginal. The popular press characterized the city as a place for non-conformists, home to



“escapism, Yogi, nudism, or nearly anything else” as the *Vancouver Province* reported in 1947.<sup>3</sup>

Prior to World War II, North Vancouver designs were predominantly of British origin. The vernacular, because of the nearby sawmills, was wood framed with plank siding, cedar shingles, and a gabled or raked roof—a nod to the generous rains. The better houses sat on granite plinths, like the Maclure mansions across the inlet. There were also various styles of log cabins acknowledging North Van’s rustic setting.<sup>4</sup> Because North Van was more working class and the houses less exuberant than in West Vancouver, young architects were able to risk new solutions to the urgent need for housing. The economic constraints that Fred Hollingsworth faced in North Van seem to have instilled a creative discipline less evident in his grander works. Arthur Erickson’s North Van projects, on the other hand, seem quite free of constraint, just as inventive in the small economy model as in his larger and more famous West Van houses. Ned Pratt’s North Van work shows the same clarity and restraint as his better known projects elsewhere—in fact, the Ritchie house is an almost perfect rendition of his style, a West Coast classic.

The single family house as the preferred format for Modernist experimentation is often the outcome of a close relationship between architect and client.<sup>5</sup> The post-war mood of optimism spurred the exploration of new spatial configurations. The key protagonists experimented with innovative solutions gleaned from Frank Lloyd Wright’s Usonian houses, the Los Angeles Case Study Houses, provocations from Richard Neutra, examples from Oregon, always within an organic approach to design and the drive to temper the machinic qualities of modernism with lyrical inflections from the landscape, topography, the cloudy skies, and even the rainfall. The influence of Japanese prototypes (referred to as “oriental” at that time) is evident in the post-and-beam construction and modular panels of the exteriors that often give them their semblance of rationality.

A distinctive aspect of the fifties and sixties architecture in BC was the integration of artistic and architectural practices. Artist-couples like Bert and Jessie Binning, Doris and Jack Shadbolt, and Molly and Bruno Bobak, were as vital to the local scene as designers like Charles and Ray Eames were to Los

<sup>3</sup> Reporter Alan Jessup quoted in Sommer, *op cit.*, 213.

<sup>4</sup> The cabin exemplifying the rustic hut ideal, with its simple plan and few interior walls, is a model for the minimal dwelling unit, as in Le Corbusier’s own *cabanon* on the shore of the Mediterranean.

<sup>5</sup> Mies’s relationship to his client, Dr. Edith Farnsworth, is a case in point. See for example, the chapter in Alice T. Friedman, *Women and the Making of Modern Architecture* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1998).

Angeles.<sup>6</sup> While no bohemians, these artist-households provided practical alternatives to the ritual formality of conventional domestic architecture, and a sort of public example for all, not least because so many of them were also teachers. Studio space was integrated into the life of the house itself—this architecture actually domesticated the studio in much the same way that the industrial loft studio was domesticated by the gentrification of the '80s and '90s. “This modern domestic space was new to Vancouver. It was by and large the space in which paintings were made and the space they were meant to animate. This ‘setting’ for abstract painting doubtless influenced its production, not just in terms of scale, but towards abstraction’s optimistic domestic and urban values.”<sup>7</sup> Such ideals were promoted by the Art in Living group, the New Design Gallery, and the Vancouver Art Gallery through its exhibitions of ceramics, furniture, and paintings by local artists and designers, such as *Design for Living* (1949) that included architectural plans.

The newly developing suburban domestic lifestyle had profound cultural impact on the post-war period during which these modernist houses were constructed. There was the challenge of integrating women into the new domestic regime—the same ones who had been independent agents in the war-time economy. The cultural-intellectual elevation of the house to a cultural artifact emphasized the importance of woman’s new role in a progressive society. Architecture gave spatial expression to the intensified domesticity of the privatized family life of the suburbs. Pastoral, isolated from work and politics, the suburban house no longer needed to segregate the traditional formal and informal or male and female spaces. In the new open plan house, kitchen walls vanished and women’s primary workspace was submerged in other zones, particularly the newly minted “family room.” All in all, home design expressed the unity of the nuclear family.<sup>8</sup>

Redefined domesticity played into the developing West Coast style, encoded into the plan and reinforced by the sectional conditions, such as the split level design, popular in North Vancouver because of the way it could adapt to the

<sup>6</sup> Doug Shadbolt designed the first Bobak house; Fred Hollingsworth designed the studio-house for the photographer Selwyn Pullan; artist Fred Douglas lived in a Ron Thom house; artist/poet Roy Kiyooka hired Henry York Mann. Architecture was not yet just for the carriage trade.

<sup>7</sup> Scott Watson, “The Lost City: Vancouver Painting in the 1950s,” in eds. Elder, Thom et al, *A Modern Life: Art and Design In British Columbia 1945-1960*, (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery/Arsenal Pulp Press), 95.

<sup>8</sup> See for example Rhodri Windsor Liscombe, *The New Spirit, Modern Architecture in Vancouver 1938-1963* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre/ Montreal: Canadian Centre for Architecture 1997).

terrain.<sup>9</sup> The open plan, minimizing fixed walls in favor of free-flowing space, found a welcome home on the West Coast, given its potential to integrate exterior space into its realm. In BC this was enabled by the post and beam system used in many of the projects by Ned Pratt and his protégés Hollingsworth and Thom, plus many others including the builder Lewis Construction. Also seen as more affordable since it saved on construction of walls, the open plan was understood as a rational response to the new conditions for living, and to the ready availability of wood.<sup>10</sup> Plans followed a module, typically 4'x4', which gave them a logic that was simple and straightforward—and thus economical—to construct. In the North Vancouver houses, it was finally social logic and economy that drove the layout, although they never quite attained the free compositions of the more benign climate of California, or the lucid abstractions of Mies van der Rohe's Farnsworth House.<sup>11</sup> Pratt's houses, preoccupied with the logic of construction, are more controlled than those of his protégés, but they are much less constrained than those of Frederick Lassere and Peter Oberlander whose projects are urban, even European, in feel, and whose relationship to the site seems dogmatic in comparison. By controlling the space to the boundaries of the building site, the open plan exploits the potential of the suburban setting, where a house could be nestled among lush trees, or perched on a steep slope overlooking a magnificent view of the Pacific landscape and skies—and on a limited budget! Trees or hedges afforded the privacy that the large expanses of glass denied.

Cultural awareness of the potential of modern architecture to embody “today's way of life” was widely disseminated in the 1950s and early '60s, by national magazines like *Canadian Homes and Gardens*. Vast public interest was aroused. In 1950, Fred Hollingsworth's “Sky Bungalow,” forerunner to the show homes of today,

<sup>9</sup> The split level is another Wright innovation, just like the carport.

<sup>10</sup> There were various approaches to the free plan: the L-shape with day and night-time activities in separate wings joined by a services core, inter-connected pavilions each with a distinct function, the linear plan with living room and sleeping area on opposite ends separated by a kitchen-dining room, and the u-plan defining an open court or garden. Large areas of glazing (not the framed “picture windows” of conventional suburban houses, but sections of the wall replaced by floor to ceiling glass) blur the visual distinction between inside and out, and the overhangs extend the house volumetrically into the site. Inside, long views extend through the flowing space to reveal the inner relationships of its constituent volumes.

<sup>11</sup> While Mies's radical spatial experiment, the 1951 Farnsworth House, seems to have influenced the California architects such as Craig Ellwood, it never gained a foothold in the in BC's domestic work. This could well be due toward an attitude to the relationship to landscape: while Mies treated the landscape as scenery to be framed by floor and ceiling planes, West Coast architects saw landscape as a continuation of the interior spaces of the house. Also, Mies's landscape settings were already tamed, quite in contrast to the rough forested slopes and ravines of North Vancouver.

attracted almost 10% of the population of the Lower Mainland to tour it while on display in the Hudson's Bay parking lot—a true blockbuster. The emphasis on life rather than design was already evident in the Bauhaus 30 years earlier: “The basis of the modern architecture . . . [is] the new mentality . . . the view we take and the manner in which we judge our needs . . . . [W]e investigate, foster and utilize [“the new materials”] only if we can thereby achieve a genuine improvement, a greater degree of clarity, a greater ease, and a truer exposition of living as a whole, including aesthetics.”<sup>12</sup> These ideals were manifest in a functionalism that searched for a better fit with the needs and aspirations of users as expressed in the individual dwelling, but also for answers to the pressing problems of the modern city—the form of the “ideal city” and housing solutions for the poor and disadvantaged. As land was still plentiful and relatively cheap, the social aspirations of the “heroic” phase of west coast modernism focused on the single family dwelling and failed to come to terms with the denser urban form.<sup>13</sup>

A belief of the time was that modern art had to be accessible to all, and that modern architecture had to be grounded in social commitment.<sup>14</sup> The houses discussed here can be seen as examples of a type of counter-practice. What these apparently modest projects represent is the commitment of modernist architecture to a social principle, one that went missing shortly after their construction and was all but absent by the 1960s when these architects were servicing clients with generous budgets. Unabashedly suburban in a time when the suburbs were seen as an unquestionable solution to the needs of the “way we live now,” they turn away from the city and its poor and leave those problems to others.

As affluence and consumer culture spread, BC was overtaken by a return to the picturesque roots of the English colonial tradition in which the province remains firmly rooted. This was accompanied by the splitting of the local art and architecture scenes. As artists fled architecture, some headed for the mudflat squats. While in England, the critique of modernist abstraction of the post-war years incorporated the social imagery and methods of an artist like Richard Hamilton, the primacy of the lyrical landscape tradition effectively isolated local

<sup>12</sup> Marcel Breuer, 1937 quoted in Paul Alan-Johnson, *The Theory of Architecture* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1994), 134.

<sup>13</sup> The social housing experiment abandoned with Project 58, which replaced part of the Strathcona neighbourhood with European-style slab blocks before it was halted, remains an unfulfilled aspiration. See Windsor Liscombe op. cit.

<sup>14</sup> At the same time, racial codes were still enforced. The January 1958 *Ubysey* reported that restrictive clauses were still enforced in suburbs such as Capilano Highlands.

architects from the wider cultural discourse. From the late-1960s local artists increasingly took on architecture and the urban environment as a field for critical investigation rather than lyrical extrapolation.<sup>15</sup>

The local modernist style in its purest form was largely exhausted by the early 1970s. Thom's work of that period shows investigations of European organic models such as those of Alvar Aalto and Hans Scharoun; Hollingsworth's practice continued to grow, but the Neoteric ideal was over. The "triumph of lyricism over rationalism"<sup>16</sup> was soon supplanted by hippy-era work such as the Kiyooka House of Henry Thomas Mann (in the relatively isolated Riverside Drive area of the city), who integrated regionalism with issues that today belong in the category of sustainability. Ron Thom's more mature work favours vernacular-inspired examples of Wright which could incorporate more spatial drama, and thus reflect the topography of the site and satisfy discerning clients.<sup>17</sup> While Ned Pratt's structural rationalism was initially taken up by builders such as Lewis Construction, it eventually turned into a more extravagant style (as in the work of Brian Hemingway), and the gigantified versions made possible by the now ubiquitous glue-lam beam, hallmark of the new West Coast style.

The abandonment of the rational-social imperative represented by these North Vancouver houses of the 1950s transformed the West Coast style from modernist experiment into updates of the established historical styles that dominate our suburbs. This extrapolation of the British colonial heritage, rendered spectacular by the spatial and structural effects made possible by through the technological development of wood and glass structure, belies the changing cultural and economic demographics of the region. It seems that the divorce of high architecture from its original social concerns as expressed by a commitment to housing rather than houses, has led to a cityscape where exclusive waterfront enclaves abut the squalor of single room accommodations. As Benjamin predicted, the modernist dream has unfolded most cunningly.

<sup>15</sup> Ironically perhaps, the artists working with the Vancouver cultural landscape have become much more renowned than any of its architects.

<sup>16</sup> Windsor Liscombe, *op. cit.*, 123.

<sup>17</sup> Doug Shadbolt's book on Thom eschews the early work in favour of the later lavish projects such as the Frum House in Toronto and the institutional work such as the ornate Massey College, and includes no information on Thom's own house—a significant lapse in the study of an architect's work.



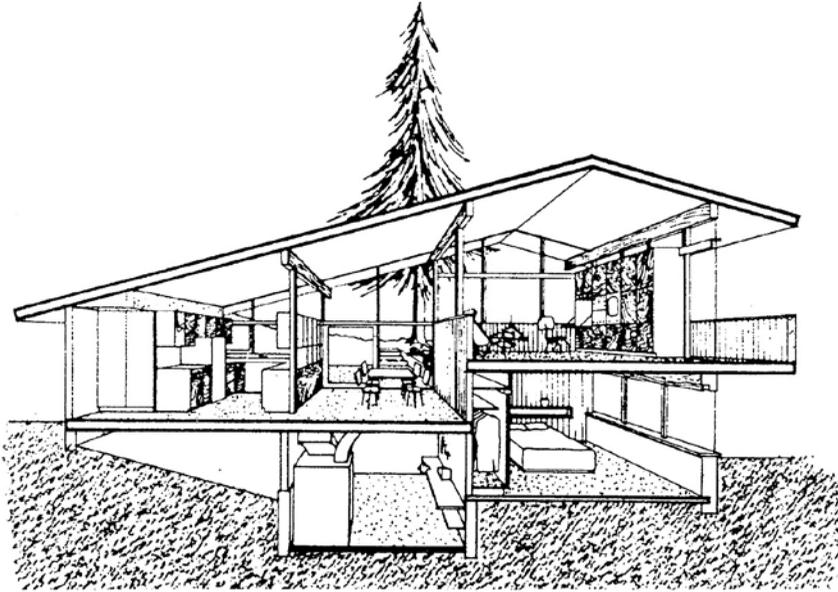
**RITCHIE RESIDENCE** (Ned Pratt, 1950)

Pratt was an early proponent of the post-and-beam system that lets interior partitions float freely in space. While the structure allows for an open plan, the exterior was set by the width of the plywood panel cladding. The plywood spandrels alternate with full height-glazing modules to create a pavilion-like feeling, a building of great transparency and clarity. Pratt was doing in wood what Mies was doing in steel. The house exploits the power of the large, single sheets of glass to express the modern. The flat roof extends well beyond the walls, supported by the exposed beams below; the roof edge is thin, emphasizing its planar quality, which distinguishes it from the heftier appearance of his Wright influenced colleagues.



**THOM HOUSE** (Ron Thom, 1952)

This compact house was featured in a *Canadian Homes and Garden* article, "Experimental Home," in June of 1953. It is a sleek composition of plywood panels and fine horizontals, and a departure from his usual picturesque mode. The single storey design is functionally arranged, bedrooms separated from the living-dining zone by an open "family" area and services core. An experiment in construction, the house took just two weeks to erect once the slab was poured. The exterior alternates plywood panels with full-height glazing between the visible posts. Where interior space connects to outdoor terraces, the roof beams extend out and support simple trellises, again without adornment. Thom's rendering suggests a Miesian influence in its modular regularity and direct expression of the structural frame. Even the column made of standard lumber was perhaps derived from a contemplation of the cross-shaped steel column of Mies' Barcelona pavilion. The kitchen, which may have been ample in the 1950s, is like the galleys with flipdown appliances often used by Mies, and seems more a passage than a room of its own.



*Western Holmes & Living, August 1954, page 11*

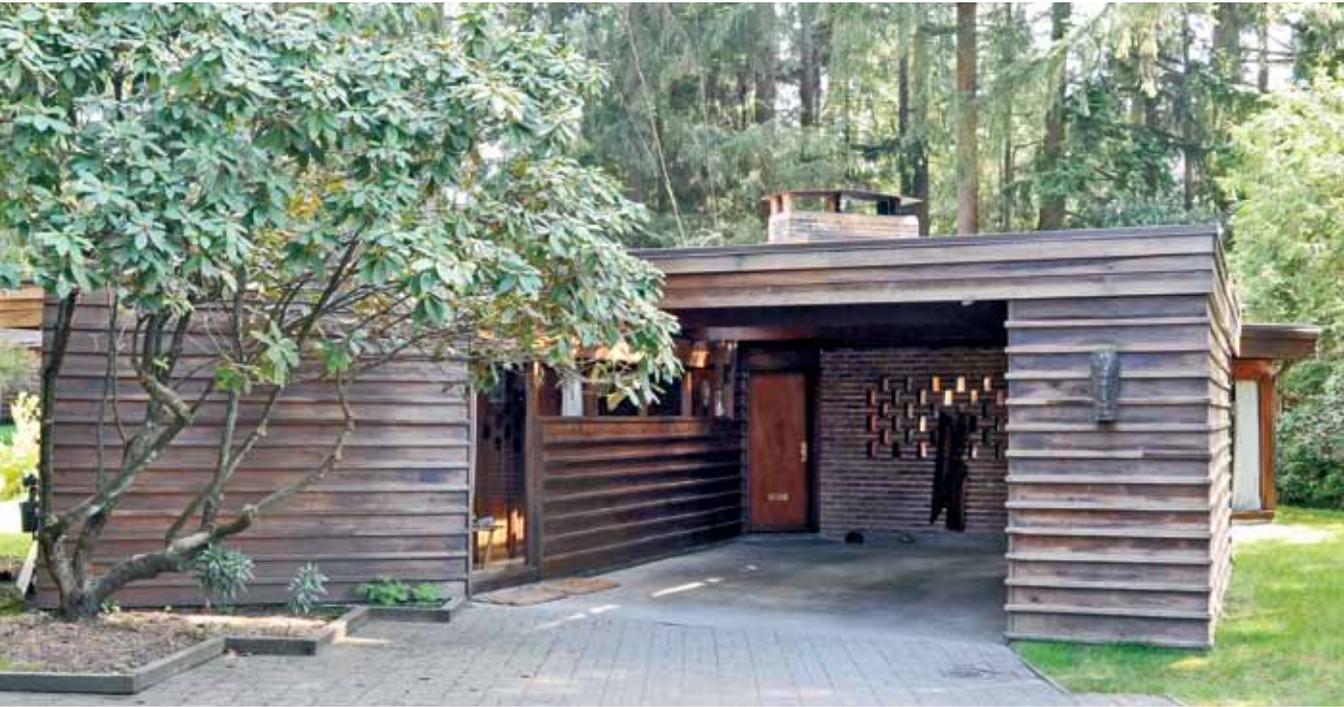
**TREND HOUSE** (Porter & Davidson Architects, 1954)

Built as a display house to promote BC wood, it was decorated by Eaton's and the National Gallery of Canada. The post-and-beam construction punctuates the space but has minimal impact on the plan. The structure is used as a tactical means for creating space. The prominent roof is pitched like a chalet, no doubt to complement the mountain setting, and also reflects the split-level layout. The plan appears very modern—the entire top floor living area is without walls—while at the same time the house is clearly divided into living room, dining room, kitchen, like a Victorian “grand dame” despite the modernity of its expanses of glass. The front and side are wrapped by a deck much like a traditional verandah. The house nestles in its sloped site, but the flow remains primarily visual. Clearly its role as a marketing tool for the suburban developer meant the house had to have broad appeal. This prototype was often used by builders, and there are numerous variations on the theme in the near area.



**BOBAK HOUSE** (architect unknown, 1953-1955)

Any trace of the handmade is eliminated in this strictly panelized facade, apparently made with plywood stressed skin construction that explores the benefits of prefabricated, off-site, industrial building. The grouping of windows into continuous horizontal bands is somehow reminiscent of Le Corbusier's strip windows; this is no “free façade,” but a tightly ordered exercise in rational production and thus similar to Neutra's aluminum skin panels but rendered in plywood. The two-storey volume has little to do with the ground-hugging of the picturesque, and there seems no attempt to create an organic relationship to the site, underlined by the manner in which the house is entered from a short bridge. The front door appears to lead into a double-height circulation space.



**Moon House** (Fred Hollingsworth, 1950)

An encampment in nature, this post-and-beam house of two interconnected pavilions uses the “Neoteric” system adapted from Wright’s populist Usonian houses. An organic plan, the pavilions sit at 45 degrees to the property line so as to appropriate the exterior as well-defined outdoor rooms. The spatial sequence flows from inside to the wooded setting outside and straight back in again, creating intimate spaces. The built-in interior furniture reflects modernist cabin-style. The exterior wood treatment with its alternating wide and narrow strips of unfinished cedar references log-cabin construction as well as Wright, evident in flourishes like the wood lighting fixture at the entrance.



**NAIRNE HOUSE** (Ronald Nairne, 1956)

Nairne was a young partner at the prestigious firm of McCarter & Nairne where Erickson and Shadbolt also worked. This house synthesizes numerous influences: post and beam as well as load-bearing brick; floating panels and screens; a somewhat Miesian plan, with pronounced fin walls; and a Wright-like living room with prominent fireplace. Laid out on an 8' module, the house includes an open plan living area, a conventionally planned sleeping wing with extensive corridors, and a screened entrance court connecting to the carport. "Louvered fencing surrounds the whole house—giving it an intriguing oriental appearance." (*Western Homes and Living*, July 1958) If we understand the refinement of the regional style to be a gradual process of addition and subtraction, we can now see that Nairne added too many disparate elements to the mix and did not cut away the superfluous.



**BARNES RESIDENCE** (Hartley & Barnes, 1960)

Fine interlocking of a spatially open volume that still seems to have a lot of solid walls. Very disciplined formal project of high ambition. Also a marriage of the vernacular of the cheap and easy construction and a sophisticated formal theorem. But definitely, at the same time a straightforward, utilitarian, or even 'functionalist' plan. The idea of the separate deck off the kitchen is an interesting notion, the kitchen becomes a sort of independent domain. The woman's role is spatially acknowledged. The vertical siding also differentiates it from the bungalow-Wrightian horizontality of Birmingham's 1946 Walters residence and makes it look like something that could have been built just now. The projecting carport and shaped stair volume are reminiscent of early modernists like Le Corbusier.



**PERRY HOUSE** (Arthur Erickson, 1963)

The Perry house deploys Erickson's signature elements—the post and lintel—in a synthesis of Asian and European tectonics. There is hardly a façade or elevation to orient our understanding of the place, the emphasis being primarily on the space created by the interplay between plan and site. Unfinished narrow cedar strips clad the exterior (vertical board and batten but without the boards). Verandah-like passages connect all interior and exterior spaces into a single sequence. It has the feel of a Japanese wood-frame house, but with space created by fixed walls rather than sliding partitions and screens. The pinwheel plan creates a sequence of exterior spaces, each with its own character and appropriate for different situations. Suspended between rationalism and abstraction, it references the cabin in the woods.

## CHRISTOPHER GLEN / Hybrid Ground, Grouse Grind

The Trail that has become known as the Grouse Grind, as opposed to the BCMC (British Columbia Mountain Club Trail) or other variants, originated with the hardy, but canny, old hikers kitty-cornering it to the cable car that services Grouse Mountain's ski facility for the easy way out. Its development came from the back country hiking community, who used it to keep the hiking body ticking over while marooned in the city. With time, the improvised trail was improved, largely by the same community. The trail took a cultural turn in the early 1990s, when Grouse Mountain, riding the wave of enthusiasm for more challenging "events" and the representations thereof—think Banff Film Festival, and all the hyped "extreme" things that now make the ordinary seem more and more mundane, not worth getting off the couch for—established an event called "The Race" and also coined "The Grouse Grind."<sup>1</sup> Yes the grind that many take to be part of mundane popular culture, is also The Grind, and whenever it is pertinent, The Grind®. The bare bones of it: over 2.9 kilometers, with

inclines of up to 30° for much of the way, and gains of 850 odd meters in elevation.<sup>2</sup>

Part of a more or less frequent exercise regimen for many, the trail puts routine users and neophytes, as with other supposedly polarized solitudes, in regular passing contact. Regulars and their affines don't need much of the cautionary introduction, although they can certainly generate enough chatter of their own on what the Grind "does" for them. However routine the Grind is for some, there is inevitably a lot of wariness about drawing the uninitiated into an activity that can seriously test them. It's a popular draw, over-hyped even, opening it up to the ill-prepared, be it shoes, water supplies, or physical and psychological experience of such exertion. One sees it often enough, misery embodied, completely at odds with what they've been talked into, often with somewhat sympathetic friends, encouraging or cajoling. "Can't!" "Next Switchback." In the end, do it they pretty well "must," barring real mishap and mobilization of North Shore Rescue. The key is to rec-

<sup>1</sup>A name that originates in much the same way a new subdivision's street names might, albeit with its perceived edge, from a decision making body around a table. The North Shore Mountain biking community will crisscross their patch with even edgier names. The Grouse Grind should sediment down into the culture unproblematically, unlike say, The Baden Powell Trail, or even, dare one say it, British Columbia. Witness the crosscurrents of the Strait and all the naming that the Vancouver's and Quadra's of the world unleashed with their own proprietary ambitions, not yet legally secured. The Grind® is interesting. The trail begins and ends on Grouse Mountain property. The

trail itself is in Greater Vancouver Regional District hands. They maintain it, and have vastly improved it at taxpayers' cost (a good thing), working against the, at times, rapid erosion. Aesthetically, the stone work seems very much superior to the timbered steps.

<sup>2</sup>By way of comparison, for those who would do this kind of elevation gain by car, the Cypress Bowl road from marked kilometer 2, to unmarked kilometer 12 rises about 700 meters over 10 kilometers, or for the true North Vancouver comparison, over approximately 12 kilometers the road up Mount Seymour gains about 900 meters.

ognize that it is only purgatory, not hell. It will end even if you have to draw on all your companions' indulgences. Basic health and a level of fitness apart, careful pacing (whatever pace) is crucial. Soldier on, and don't let the pacey passerby (grinding flâneur, or flâneuse perhaps) distract you. More perversely, and as an aside to most advisories, yes watch hydration, but hydration alone won't do it. The first-timer feeling bushwhacked needs only look around to see more or less intense approaches, different levels of expectation. There will be people churning by, others teeter-tottering, many chit-chatting, catching up with friends, or out with only their cell phones (catching up with friends . . . whatever). If one can get over the humps—not a real hike, too crowded, prefer the BCMC with the cultural undercurrents of in/authenticity<sup>3</sup> and vulgarization, it turns out to be what you make of it, a grind to be endured or relished.

A passing problem is how to address the Grind's exceptionalism without offering grist to the Vancouver mill of self-congratulation that so craves world-class standing. The Grind is, in a way, an extraordinary outcome of the proximity of a metropolitan fringe to the front country of the Coastal Range, which with a turn here, or

twist there might well feel like back country to some. (A governor general wearing the wrong shoes might believe herself to be in the Rockies no less.) It is, after all, North Shore Rescue's backyard. There is a lot of other hiking (and biking, and skiing and snowshoeing and...) on all that front country terrain. But there is only one Grind.

The lynchpin that makes it possible for this particular trail to become The Grind, is of course the gondola. Yes, one can hike down the Grind. Some do. For all the pain that the uninitiated feel they are suffering in going up, the real pain, and potential damage is done coming down. It is not for nothing that one of the North Shore's other events is called "The Knee Knacking" (48 km from Horseshoe Bay to Deep Cove, up *and* down three mountains). Going up the Grind, however, is compatible with a fair number of sports injuries, a good number of aging knees and, ask any regular, the bangs-for-exercising-buck are remarkable. The bell curves of physical attributes are well represented in who turns out for the Grind, often surprisingly so, but a lot of darned good athletes throw it into the mix for good reason and few of them have any inclination for hurtin' in the wrong places.

The gondola is of course part of Grouse Mountain's ski facility and the service it provides people who do the Grind is, to say the least, much appreciated. It is the crucial source of the Grind's popularity. For the most part, it works, bar the downloading pile-ups of busy summer days, and the entrapment in the gon-

<sup>3</sup>The authenticity of the Grind apart, its specificity stands up well in comparison to what a *Globe and Mail* Feb. 20, 2009 piece called "Tower Running" i.e. using high rise stairwells as treadmills. If one can get over the hurdles of security, and if the "being there" of the stairwell suits, it is an option, which like the Grind has its aficionados. With permission, it seems the Empire State Building has served the purpose, and the views are accredited "world class" on a day with good visibility.

dola going down. Listening to the mix of safety announcement, hospitality, and marketing often enough allows the so-inclined to note the performance.

The gondola is not the only infrastructural prosthetic that enables the exercise routine. There's a lot of horsepower in that parking lot plus a short drive to piping hot water so that the righteously exercised can get on with Vancouver lives. Something so ordinary, for some, like so much else is predicated on the wherewithal of our moment in modernity. Lucky for some, the when and where of history would suggest that for most of time, the ordinariness of the Grind would be unimaginable. A possible replication of the Grind, in say Cape Town, up Table Mountain, on the Platteklip Gorge route, and down in the cable car is imaginable. It is all right there, in much the same way. It is a different city where the presumptions of modernity are distributed very differently. Attention to personal wellbeing by somewhat frequent grinding is by some measures a luxury (which might be hard to figure for those over-committed souls struggling up). In the same vein, one suspects strongly that energy-use audits for the self-propelled crowd would produce a fair amount of wincing.

But there it is on the North Shore, very northern, very western, very Pacific north-western, used as one of the very Vancouver strands by which the city is branded in certain markets. For the moment, the branding of Vancouver is massively overdetermined by one of the world's mega/meta brands, the Olympics (a ferocious defender of its <sup>TM</sup> and <sup>®</sup>—witness its going to the corners with Team Canada,

likewise committed to the business of <sup>TM</sup> and <sup>®</sup>, albeit wrapped in a nationally thicker blanket of sentiment). Under the debris of that avalanche (yes, the Cultural Olympiad allows for some gems, some critical engagement so long as you can track them down, have your peeps on and television off), the grind, The Grind, The Grouse Grind<sup>®</sup> is drawn upon for niche markets of adventure ecotourism. It is bear country, the hazard can be extreme and, head-lamp-ascents apart, it is not a place to over-night. Grouse Mountain makes of it what it can. The further one is, culturally, from the mundane ordinariness of grinding, the more likely the aura of "extreme adventure ecotourism" will prevail. While the primary assets are the ski hill in the winter and the theme park in the summer (enclosed bears, "wild lumberjacks," gondola rides over what passes for wolf habitat) maximizing the seasonally regulated flow of people on the Grind helps. Thus The Grind<sup>®</sup>, The T-shirt and so on.

The boundaries between inventing and capitalizing on popular phenomena are often complicated both as a matter of origins and as a matter of what becomes of them with time. So too, with the Grind, the entanglements with never so simple popular culture can be observed. Minor key stuff, but symptomatic nonetheless. The Grouse Grind<sup>®</sup> is Grouse Mountain's intellectual property notwithstanding the fact that much (but less than one might think) of the trail itself is on Greater Vancouver Regional District land, and is a public trail. Grouse Mountain owns/leases the land at either end of the trail as part of the ski hill and gondola-servicing operations. By virtue of their location, they are able to

capitalize on the upward stream of hikers, and make a buck or two ferrying them down. Ownership of The Grind® is a different matter altogether. As noted above, it started with the event, the race that became named The Grouse Grind® (quite likely drawing on some wag in the woods of popular culture whose mutter, like an Andean potato, got chosen and “turned into” intellectual property without a magical realist in earshot). This is the key in the cultural apparatus that marketing uses to help brand Grouse Mountain. The trail itself is really just like the water in the can of Coke that Coca-Cola so assiduously wraps in secret recipe, caffeine, and an extraordinary amount of cultural baggage. Nothing is as simple as the trail that exerts one and the water that rehydrates. All the chatter and grousing about the grind, be it interior monologue or word of mouth, amplified in the local field of public representations allows for a symbiosis between marketing and the culture at large that can only be a boon to Grouse Mountain. Looking to deepen the experience, or perhaps the complicities in a world of curiously engendered communities, Grouse Mountain would have one join The Grouse Grind® Community, Facebook facilitated. That further step brings one closer to the fate of ‘OncoMouse’™ on his or her assorted trials and treadmills.<sup>4</sup> The endorsement of the Grind, sans ®, in popular culture is the best possible endorsement of The Grouse Grind® as it is circulated further and further afield as part of a bundle of “to do’s” in “Destination Vancouver,” sometimes, even more specifically “Destination

North Vancouver.” So along with, say, the Capilano Suspension Bridge, tourist trap for some, satisfactory outing for others, the Grind is offered as Canada’s most popular trail (probably a numbers game, so tough luck the Rockies; the Sea Wall, a local rival, is well, just a walk in the park). “Mother Nature’s Stairmaster” gets the attention in the hybrid gym/ground category although I worry that Stairmaster should be Stairmaster® or is that Treadmaster™? I don’t know or care because I don’t do gyms.

There is another twist in the tale of the trail’s divide between franchised “official” that is ® public and irregular popular public. For many, most even, one emerges from the forest walk, and one does or does not touch the rock. You are “there,” more or less, a place in the sun, if the sun is out. If one is bothered, that is or can be your Grind time. It doesn’t help that with so many people grinding, erosion around the said rock has progressed so rapidly that geological time looks to be undercutting, maybe even underscoring grind times. But there you are, with a time. There is also, however, the aforementioned “race.” Very public and with that, the way of the world, has its muscling imperatives. The event (along with its sponsors—including my bank, so again I “pay” for it) must be amplified, i.e. televised, because that is how that part of it works. Just as they messed with the pure distance of the 26-mile Olympic marathon for royalty

<sup>4</sup>For more, go to Donna J Haraway, *Modest Witness @Second Millennium \_FemaleMan@\_Meets\_Oncomouse*™, Routledge, 1977.

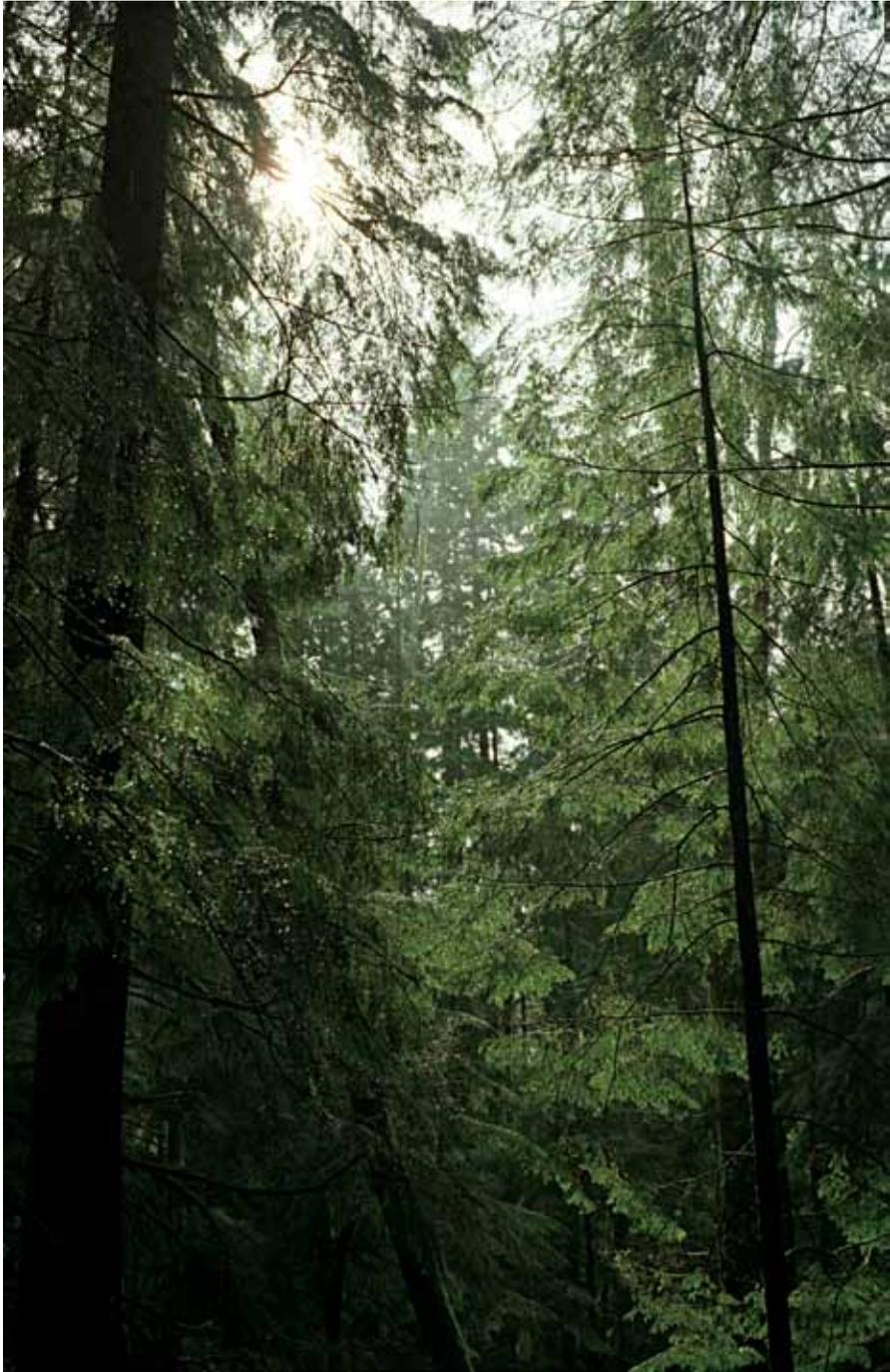
sitting in their box 385 yards<sup>5</sup> away, so they messed with “our” times on the Grind for the television coverage. Grind on to the *official* finish line, with the radio frequency chip attached to your Grind™ Timer Card (time takes to commodification every which way it can), and have your time recorded, displayed, tabulated for the small public that cares. Ignore the rock (what would they say on the far side), ignore the amaordinaries<sup>6</sup> basking in their having done it (but not quite, officially). All for the dictates of the camera, that section of open ground that allows the event to be televised. What does it matter? Very little. It’s just the question that so of

ten comes with mention of the Grind. Your time, even if the question only draws disdain from some, does tell something. After that, as with any cultural practice, its so what-ness is not containable. It is what one makes of it. It’s what one brings to grinding, be it from Cape Town’s Table Mountain or Teheran’s Alborz Mountains, from the Lake District or Himalayas, the Sea Wall or Buntzen Lake trail, the sofa or the treadmill.<sup>7</sup> It is also more than that as is “told” by the encrusting public culture which saturates popular culture, not always alive to the proprietary entanglements.

<sup>5</sup>I wanted to fact-check this 385 yards, just the distance, and Google messed with the whole story. The one some of us have lived with for a long time. Check out Google on the length of the marathon and you will see why I don’t want to change it. Royalty was involved and accommodating them was very much at issue. They were a lot less public then, and the public had a lot less piping hot water then. That is just the beginning of the race and the story of distance. I’m not changing the story because the meanings it produced over time seem to stand a test other than the one of exactly how the distance got to be set.

<sup>6</sup>Amaordinaries. The prefix ama- in Zulu translates as people, or people of. I once came across a reference in South African cultural studies to the “ama-respectables”. It was a derogatory designation used by the shebeen crowd partial to jazz for the church going, choral music crowd, another two solitudes whose borders were likely more permeable than allowed.

<sup>7</sup>Always worth remembering, while the grind is a long way from the NHL and the English Premier Division, but not far enough from the Olympics (a knackered knee away on Cypress Mountain, where they have messed with the Baden Powell trail), those expensive energetic bodies of elite athletes are, in a sense, loss leaders, to get bums on seats watching what it is all, bottom line, really about—marketing, warm fuzzy feeling about the Olympics notwithstanding.



Dan Siney, *Trees After Rain*, 2008  
C-Print , 152 x 102 cm, Courtesy the artist

## AURELEA MAHOOD / Riding the Shore

I learned to ride a bike as a kid on the North Shore in the late 1970s. I started in my backyard and gradually moved out onto the sidewalk. Next it was up and down the alley, around the Boulevard, and across the playing fields at school. Then down into the ravine with its tangle of trails and dirt jumps. Little did I know that as I was learning bike basics, the North Shore was already on its way to becoming a by-word for steep technical stunt-heavy riding in the wet deep green rocky rooty slopes of the North Shore mountains. The bikes that now make their way up Cypress, Fromme, and Seymour in all seasons and all weather have a story that begins in California back when I was learning to ride my first two-wheeler.

The impulse to yoke together the pleasures of riding with those of the trail had been coalescing up north too. In the mid-1980s, there were the guys a few grades ahead of me who turned up at school on their bikes in toques, black leggings, and grey woolen jerseys. I had no sense that my friends' older brothers were in the woods and that my childhood backyard could be navigated in ways that bore no relation to our family walks in Lynn Canyon and along the Baden Powell.

What was going on had been going on since the early 1980s. School friends Ross Kirkwood and Brian Ford were among the earliest trail builders on the North Shore.<sup>1</sup> In 1980, Ford lived on Peters near Lynn Canyon. From there the most direct route to Capilano College was across the suspension bridge, up the Baden Powell to Lillooet Road, and then down to campus. Ford's daily woodland commute and early mountain bike races on the Warden's Trail—an old fall line skidder road on Mount Fromme—inspired the friends to look for trail building locations that could link up existing access roads and remnants of old logging and fishing trails.

One of their earliest collaborations “Kirkford”—an amalgam of their last names—is now part of a chain that can be ridden from the seventh switchback

<sup>1</sup>Brian Ford and Ross Kirkwood were of invaluable assistance in confirming the construction dates and stories behind many of the original trails on Mount Fromme and Lower Seymour.



on Fromme: “Seventh Secret” to “Lepperd” to “Kirkford” to “Crinkum Crankum” to “Upper” and “Lower Griffen” before heading out on to McNair. Each trail name in this chain has a story. Kirkwood had no difficulties naming Seventh Secret: the opening section of Seventh was blazed off of the seventh switchback on Sunday July 7th in 1985 by seven local riders. The final two sections in the chain—Upper and Lower Griffen—were completed in the late 1980s with the help of Marcia Wood and Kevin Barlow while their three-year old son Griffen played on the forest floor. This is just one way down the mountain.

Spin up the access road beyond the yellow gate at the top of Mountain Highway. Decide how far up you want to go. It is about ten kilometers from the yellow gate to the Grouse Mountain ski area boundary. This decision will determine which of the roughly forty trails on Fromme that you might take back down. The rider with an etymological streak will know what to expect.

Kirkwood’s choice of “Crinkum Crankum” for the mid-mountain trail is apt. The dictionary definition of “narrow twisting, passage” conjures perfectly the slivers of passable terrain—or at least passable for some—winding down Fromme. So too do the noun’s anatomical associations partner nicely with Fromme’s Pink

Starfish and Severed Dick and C\*\*\* Buster over on Seymour. Body parts are frequently left tender by epic rides but this discomfort is not really worth pausing over as suggested by the names of another trio of Fromme trails: Squeaky Elbow, Crippler, and Natural High.

While Kirkwood and Ford were busy building on Fromme, Todd “Digger” Fiander was doing the same on Cypress. In 1982 he built his first trail, “Crosscut,” on Hollyburn Ridge. Like most of the early trails, “Crosscut” did not feature stunts. It was a fast flowing trail with switchbacks, tight corners, and steep drops. But his trails did not stay low for long. Bridges, ladders, and teeter-totters soon became his trademark. Fiander’s intensely technical trails, of which there are about twenty-two, inspired a generation of other builders. Skinnies, ladder bridges, log rides, and rock gardens have become staples of North Shore riding.

Good trail design responds to the specific environment. Trail builders attuned to their settings can build the perfect trail. As Kirkwood describes it, a perfect trail is mountain-sized craftsmanship that utilizes the terrain to create a monumental kinetic sculpture. What is possible on a bike animates the kinetic potential embedded in the trail. The thoughtful builder works with works with the landscape creating lines that are thrilling—sometimes spill-making—but in harmony with the changing contour lines and frequent transitions from rocky to rooty to loamy, punctuated by creek beds running from dry to raging depending on the season.

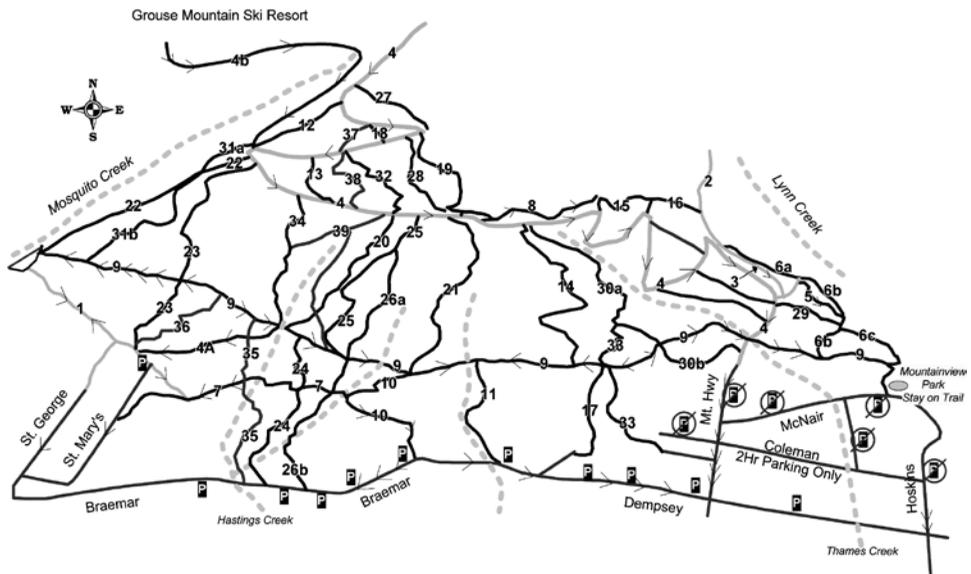
There is no shortage of people in the woods today choosing among the over one hundred trails across three mountains. Homage to all three mountains is paid by the North Shore Mountain Biking Association’s annual “Triple Crown” in early July. The “ripper” is an often costumed big day out that begins on Seymour, moves over to Fromme, and ends on Cypress for seventy or so kilometers of riding depending on each individual team’s route. There are no rules other than begin at the beginning, hit all the check points, and end at the end. The 2008 edition of the Triple Crown included the largest team ever in Ripper history: eighteen female riders of all levels of ability taking on all three mountains and, in true mountain biking fashion, faithfully documenting all of their crashes.

With official maps and events with commercial sponsors, the era of the Secret

Trail Society and unmapped trails ridden and maintained by riders who wanted to build a conflict- and hiker-free woodland playground for themselves has passed. Now there are maintenance days sponsored by the North Shore Mountain Biking Association, local bike shops, Mountain Equipment Co-op and others to help maintain the trails that are ridden by hundreds of locals every weekend along with visitors from around the world.

Some of the older brothers from my childhood now have entire livelihoods predicated on the economic value of the passion for mountain biking. Bjorn Enga is no longer simply a Megan's older brother: his *KRANKED* film series—now in its seventh edition—is staple viewing among mountain biking aficionados. Every *KRANKED* DVD features top riders and killer locations on a global scale—but always with at least one segment shot in British Columbia with local riders thrown in for good measure.

It is in this phase of riding the Shore that my own relationship with bikes resumes. Five years ago recently returned to Vancouver and struggling with a dissertation, friends noticed how little time I was spending outdoors and my



growing tendency to contradict myself in endless series of counterarguments. Would I ever again be able to respond intuitively to anything—indoors or out?

And so a five hundred loan from a friend. It is early summer, and I have a bike. Helmet. Gloves. Water bottle. And a pair of Andrew Shandro's Dragon sunglasses from the North Shore Sports Swap.

My first mountain bike was an entry-level Kona Nunu, a bike made by a company whose own story is central to the story of local mountain biking.

In early 1980s, two bike shops became synonymous with the new sport: the Deep Cove Bike Shop and West Point Cycle in Vancouver. These businesses grew up in tandem with the trails. Doug Lafavor, Charles Romalis, and Ashley Walker opened the original Deep Cove store down on Gallant in 1981. It was the first mountain bike-only store in Canada. The store was open weekdays from 12 to 5. Otherwise, the owners, employees, and customers alike were out building and riding the local trails. Originally, the store specialized in Californian bikes, but since 1995 their own bikes have dominated the store. Romalis and Walker continue to run the business. They now sell Cove bikes as well as the bikes that Lafavor now makes with Kona.

The Kona story is an extension of the West Point story. In 1981, Jacob Heilbron at West Point Cycle founded Rocky Mountain Bikes, which supplied the Californian Ritchey bikes to Canadian bike stores. Rocky started making their own bikes in 1984 with the design assistance of Derek Bailey and Paul Brodie. Rocky continues to flourish, but since the late 1980s people could also choose to ride Brodies and Konas. Paul Brodie, inventor of the iconic sloping Vancouver top tube, began making his own bikes in 1986 after starting out with Rocky. Kona was started in 1988 by Jacob Heilbron with Joe Murray and Dan Gerhard. Twenty years later, bikes from all three companies are North Shore staples.

Berm. Rollercoaster. Rolldown. Mountain biking requires knowledge of a new language. Until I learn this language, the calls of friends on the trail ahead of me make little sense. They are letting me know whether to gear down or up, to hammer or slide back, to feather the breaks or get off and walk—a practical

option in the face of terrain or stunts that outstrip my ability.

Three bikes and five years and dozens of scars later, there is pleasure in reading a description of a trail and imagining myself spinning along it. Imagining what I would be asking of my body, whether I'd be hanging off the back of my seat or keeping the front wheel down as I slide up the nose of the saddle. Imagining gearshifts in response to changing terrain. Imagining letting the bike run while negotiating tight steep sections of a trail. And knowing that post-ride, that I will be able to convey the specific triumphs and challenges of the ride to others who likewise cannot resist the pull of the trails.

The last parking lot on the northern edge of the Capilano campus gives way to the City of North Vancouver's cemetery. A road leading up to the Seymour watershed bisects the cemetery. From here, walkers, hikers, trail runners, and mountain bikers can access endless kilometers of trails. Like so many other people who live or work on the North Shore, this is my backyard. I am hooked on this warren of trails.

Bottle Top—a section of trail in my post-work loop—is exactly this sort of trail. First built in the late 1990s by Ray Anderson, Bottle Top opens with a punchy little climb that twists up to a ridge as you pick your line between the exposed roots. It flattens out into a narrow clearing that gives way to the ridge that eventually meanders a kilometer or so down to the Seymour River. There is a little bit of up and quite bit of down. Tight treed sections. Rooty sections. Rocky sections. Nice little drops. And then a swift descent down to the river with tight turns, rockwork, and a short laddered section before you are thrown on to the gravel of Fisherman's. It is a fast and moderately technical section, but cleanable for an intermediate rider—a satisfying progress marker that leaves me hungry to become a better rider.

Now with scarred calves and chainring tattoos, I know and seek the pleasures of a clean ride with no dabs. No, not a ride without mud, dirt, water, or sweat. Those are rare and not particularly desirable. A truly satisfying ride ends with a hose turned on both bike and rider.





## **INGRID BAXTER / In the Wilds of the Art World: Riverside Drive**

“What was art in the sixties as it relates to the North Shore?” You are asking me a very interesting question taking me back over forty years! Closer to fifty years if you go from 2009 to 1964! Your story of a visiting Zen Master and meditation on Riverside Drive, as Scott Watson remembers, interests me. Maybe the myths are more interesting than the facts!

I feel that I should give a brief background as to our family’s arrival at Riverside Drive along the Seymour River in about the fall of 1966. Our son, Tor, was born in 1961 in Japan where we studied art in Japan and absorbed some Zen Buddhism by osmosis which I now understand is one of the better ways to enlightenment. Our daughter, Erian, came into the world in Spokane, Washington in 1963 when we were both working on Masters degrees at Washington State University. Iain finished his MFA and I finished my M.Ed twenty years later after Iain and the kids were gone. Iain sent out over 200 application letters for teaching jobs and was subsequently hired to teach in UBC’s Fine Arts Department. So . . . we moved into faculty housing on Presidents’ Row. We met many people who all had some effect on the development of the N.E.Thing Co. Some of these people included Joanne and David Suzuki, Henry and Vi Elder, Abe Rogatnik and Alvin Balkind, Toni and Gloria Onley, Roy and Monika Kiyooka, Arthur Erickson, and many others. In Iain’s art classes there were several interesting students—Ian Wallace, Jeff Wall, Dennis Wheeler, Karen Rowden, Duane Lunden, and more. The New Design Gallery and the UBC Fine Arts Gallery were centres of interesting art activity and, of course, the Vancouver Art Gallery. All of this support was very important in the development of Vancouver art in the sixties. Not much about the North Shore so far, eh? It was real estate that got us to North Vancouver.

Iain and I bought a house in the 4000 block on 14th for \$14,000 and sold it six months later for \$16,500. Then we bought a house in the 4500 block on West 1st for \$19,000. Iain left teaching at UBC for the new, up-and-coming Simon Fraser University’s Centre for Communications and the Arts. I was also teaching but in the Physical Education Department where in 1967 we held one of the first—and probably only—“Aquatic Water Happenings” to celebrate the

Centennial of the Province, or was it for Canada's Centennial? The event was held in the Simon Fraser Swimming Pool. It ended with a parade in the water carrying sparklers that were passed up into the audience who were invited to join the swimmers while a band played for a dance in the water! The audience had been forewarned to come in bathing suits. I can remember Judith Copithorne coming over to me and saying, "Ingrid, I'm scared of water but this is really fun!" Amazing what art can do! I can remember Brian Fisher with a fishing line from the 3-Meter diving platform, Carole Itter, Moira French acting like a French maid, Glenn Lewis, Michael Morris and Brydon Smith, whose job was to drop fireworks into a bucket, were all there. Michael was delighted when we had a repeat performance at the Holiday Inn in downtown Vancouver.

Back to real estate. Because Iain and I both had to drive 45 minutes each way from the 4500 block of West 1st to teach at SFU we decided to move. We heard from Henry Elder that Riverside Drive along the Seymour River was an interesting area and we bought a one-bedroom cottage there for \$17,000 and added on with materials from Jack's Used Building Materials in Burnaby. It became our home and the headquarters of N.E. Thing Company until we split up in the late seventies.

In racking my brain and reflecting on your question, "Art in the sixties on the North Shore" . . . the North Shore part starts here, on Riverside Drive.

Iain and I had a great amount of fun in our collaborationistic synergistics (maybe my word-creativity showing here). We had heaps of creative joy in the many art concepts and resulting art products that we came up with. We were always challenging the systems of the art and business worlds. The ACTs and ARTs and ANTs (aesthetically claimed thing, aesthetically rejected thing, and aesthetically neutral thing) was the same process as the Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval and gave us the same power to declare things as ACTs, ARTs, or ANTs. Many of our projects were open-ended and could be created into a lifetime of activity. It was fun, fun, fun! I think that this joy remains and is resonating with generations now. All that we did though, was not worth a hoot if we didn't have an audience.

Many people in the art world at large—from San Francisco, Los Angeles, New York and Europe—came to visit Vancouver and to see us in North Vancouver. It was the result of people like Alvin Balkind, Doris and Jack Shadbolt, heads of galleries and schools who invited artists and art critics to come to Vancouver,



N.E. Thing Co., Act #48 Dave Buck Ford's  
Flourescent Pink Canopy Structure Over Cars and  
Trucks, Marine Drive, Near 1st Narrows Bridge,  
North Vancouver, B.C., 1968, 33 x 49.5 cm, BG1390

N.E. Thing Co., Act #30 Cement Transitional Wall Along  
Entire Park & Tilford Co. Main Street, North Vancouver,  
B.C., 1968, 33 x 49.5 cm, BG1392

who in turn invited us as Co-Presidents of N.E. Thing Co. to have shows. When we travelled, we met other people and, of course, invited them to come and visit us on the North Shore. Most of the “big city people” really enjoyed the rural environment of Riverside Drive, Mount Seymour, Grouse Mountain, and all.

Lucy Lippard and her partner Seth Siegelaub visited Vancouver a few times. I can remember one time when at a party at our house, Bob Smithson who was in the area to cover an island with glass, Bob and Lucy Lippard were going at it in typical New York style of conversation and George Sawchuk, our Riverside Drive dear artist neighbour, said “Boy, if that is what New York is like, I am never going there!” George developed into quite an interesting artist and now lives near Fanny Bay on Vancouver Island. His “Art Garden” of wood sculptures is included on many bus tours. Lucy at one time quoted Iain as saying that “A word is worth 1/1000th a picture.” Both Iain and I remember that it was my idea and that I should have been given credit but that’s how it went in a male-dominated culture of that time. It wasn’t often that we could remember who thought of what. I hope that women now get the credit that is due to them.

A journalist came from New York to photograph the *Extended Noland* and write about the N.E. Thing Co. for an issue of *Time* magazine. When he arrived at our house the temperature was way below freezing and had been for some time, the toilet was frozen solid, and the only water we had was from a continual running faucet outside. We had a blanket over the door to the new part of the house that we were building so that the part we were living in was kept warm. He probably had quite the stories to tell his mates when he got back to New York after that assignment!

There were various art “big guys” who came from the East to visit us and other Vancouver artists: David Silcox of the Canada Council, Pierre Theberge and Brydon Smith of the National Gallery. Judy Chicago and her partner from LA came. Judy was into coloured smokes and water dyes at that time. I can remember her turning the Seymour River into very interesting red flows as her expression of art at that time. Later, we had a great Thanksgiving dinner with them in LA. These are just a few of the many that came to the North Shore. We wondered where was the centre of the arts (other than us). Paris had been, then it was New York, then LA (when *Artforum* magazine was published there), and then back to New York, or maybe it was in the middle of the Atlantic because of the European conceptual artists. Does it matter?



One person who was active on the North Shore was Ken James, the Principal of the Maplewood Elementary School when Tor and Erian went there in the sixties. He knew of our various activities and became inspired to start the “Artists4Kids Trust Fund.” Glenn and Colleen Toppings lived in the little white house up Indian Arm above the big White House. Iain and I spent our first New Year’s party there where we stayed overnight . . . what fun!

Tom and Eda Burrows and the mudflats . . . they were the couple that we probably socialized with the most. Eda was a great spirit! I was happy when she split off into her clowning career. They had a great outhouse over the creek. When you would sit down you could see, feel, and hear the creek running below you. It was very conducive to producing results. Here’s another good story. I came to visit Eda one day and she was cooking a great big salmon. Knowing that salmon was expensive and that their cash flow was not great I asked her where did she get it. She said, “Oh, Tom just kicked it out of the creek.” Couldn’t be allowed either of those events these days.

I love your penchant to romanticize our time there in the sixties with questions about “wilderness living.” In reality, it was a small garage with a porch and one bedroom and kitchen to which we added a large living room, a couple of loft bedrooms and our office/workshop for N.E. Thing Co. The usual young people-struggles with the advantage that I could put aside my career for the time being and be an at-home Mom and collaborate with Iain to create the things we did. Good times!! We didn’t have much contact with North Shore culture—we were too busy. If I look back on those times, heaps of ideas and works were accomplished in the mid- to late-sixties.

You asked about the sculpture in Blueridge. We claimed it as an ACT. I believe that Dirk Oostindie, head of the District of North Vancouver Parks Department had it built to add colour to the area in a small park in Blueridge. Dirk did a lot of artistic things for the District. And the mirror reflection pieces . . . We did those in several places including the Seymour River. I was fascinated by the fact that when you position an object such as a mirror to reflect something visual, in its placement you also subtract something visual at the same time. Is this reflective writing doing the same? I wonder if these verbal reflections are much different from visual reflections. Nevertheless, I hope they give a sense of our life in the wilds of the art world and the wilds of North Vancouver.





## TREVOR CAROLAN / Dorothy Livesay in North Vancouver

Ten years ago, as a District of North Vancouver Councillor, I proposed to my colleagues in the nearby City of North Vancouver the idea of creating a memorial plaque in honour of Dorothy Livesay. An important twentieth century Canadian poet and social activist, Livesay lived in the city on and off for more than twenty years with her husband, fellow socialist Duncan McNair. They lived in several homes within view of the inner harbour: at Cumberland Crescent, then at 848-6<sup>th</sup> Street about a block from Sutherland High School, and later on toney Grand Boulevard. Livesay wrote some of her best work here—making it an appropriate place to commemorate not only a fine poet, but also a champion of women’s rights and family planning before either became fashionable. The idea of a memorial marker-stone failed to gain traction with the politicians of the day; it’s an idea that’s still out there for commissioning.

In her memoir *Journey with My Selves*, Livesay says that she originally arrived in BC wanting to find her way to the San Francisco literary scene. In fact, she came to Vancouver to work as an editor for a communist labour journal. From Vancouver she hoped to travel further south to join the Depression-era’s well-established leftist arts community concentrated in the San Francisco Bay Area.

This was IWW territory and numerous publications there served the One Big Union labour ideal, which appealed to her political interests. The city also enjoyed a long liberal tradition in its journalism and politics.

Livesay had graduated from the University of Toronto in 1931 and spent a graduate year at the Sorbonne. From France she went to London and returned to Canada exhilarated by the poetry of Pound, T.S. Eliot, Hilda Doolittle, and the French Symbolists. In her early years in North Vancouver, she met Alan Crawley, who would launch *Contemporary Verse*, the first significant Canadian literary journal west of Toronto. Livesay became part of his editorial team and participated in publishing the work of Luis Dudek, Earle Birney, P.K. Page, Miriam Waddington, Jay MacPherson, Anne Marriott—who also moved to North Vancouver in 1959—and Daryl Hine, a 19 year-old poet from Burnaby who would eventually succeed Hayden Carruth as editor at *Poetry* magazine. Her “The Lizard: October 1939” refers to a Lynn Valley populated by small farm-holdings:

In the sheltered rocks of our homeland, the Pacific waters  
Hills shrouded with evergreens and the valleys yellow  
With corn and apples; within the walls of our houses  
Splashed with a vivid wallpaper,  
Radios blare the censored version of our living...

Alan Crawley introduced Livesay to radio broadcasting, and the documentary poem for radio “Call My People Home” that she wrote as a result is the work she credits with propelling her to acclaim during the 1940s and 1950s. She lived in North Vancouver through the wartime evacuation of Japanese-Canadians. Moved by accounts of the war and by the spirit of a young Japanese-Canadian student who lived in the Livesay/McNair home for a winter, Livesay wrote “Call My People Home” from her archive of internment stories. The poem was broadcast from Vancouver on the CBC performed by local actors in August 1949; it was published in *Contemporary Verse* in 1952. The poem’s plea for multicultural tolerance echoes Earle Birney’s “Pacific Door,” written at Dollarton and published in 1947. Where Birney taps into layers of west coast pioneering and immigrant history, Livesay’s approach is more immediate:

...That was before Pearl Harbour: before a December day  
Spent on a restless sea...  
Between the curfew rung  
On Powell Street  
And the rows of bunks in a public stable...

Dorothy Livesay spent several summers as Malcolm Lowry’s neighbour in a borrowed cabin on the small stretch of Dollarton beach known as “Three Bells,” located in front of the old bee-hive sawmill burner ruins in what is now called “Little Cates” Park. Earle Birney, who also had a cabin there, often joined them and it is interesting to speculate on the effect that this pair had on Lowry’s poetic output.

During her twenty year association with North Vancouver, from 1938-58, Livesay twice won the Governor-General’s Award for Poetry—for *Day and Night* (1944) and *Poems for People* (1947). Raising children through the late-Depression and War years, she organized childcare programs at North Shore Neighborhood House—a reflection of her lifelong social commitment.

Like many Vancouver-area writers, I knew something of Dorothy, or Dee as her friends called her. She was not averse to accepting the admiration of younger members of the literary tribe and willingly shared her wisdom with those inclined to listen. She passed away in Victoria in 1997, aged 87, and British Columbia’s foremost annual poetry prize is named in her honour. Yet unlike Malcolm Lowry or Group of Seven painter Fredrick Varley, no memorial stone, view-point, or public walk has yet been dedicated in her honour in North Vancouver.

## STEVEN HARRIS / Tilt

*I try to write the most embarrassing thing I can think of.*  
John Wieners in conversation with Raymond Foye, 1984

Walking across the High Level Bridge, I remember the precision of words.

I remember William Carlos Williams' "good government is never more than the government of words"—or, rather, I misremembered it this way for many years, as I only found out recently.

I remember the Old Roller Rink on First or Second off Lonsdale, which was only open for a few months. I remember seeing Dan Hicks there, *sans* Hot Licks.

I remember walking down lower Lonsdale discussing the closing of the Old Roller Rink with Bill Bell.

I remember Harvey Wallbangers (another Dan Hicks association).

I remember the Erection Shop.

I remember buying furniture in the secondhand shops on lower Lonsdale, and carrying it home by hand.

I remember a recurring dream in which I worked my way up lower Lonsdale, discovering fabulous bookstores. I remember, years later, standing in Bill Hoffer's warehouse in Gastown and saying, "I think I've seen this in a dream." To which Hoffer replied, "I think I've seen this in a nightmare."

I remember that Moodyville was never Gastown.

I remember the Stanley Building.

I remember the Élite Café, a little further up Lonsdale.

I remember a young woman greeting me as we crossed Lonsdale in opposite directions, strangers in countercultural camaraderie.

I remember riding the Third Street bus with Chief Dan George as my most frequent fellow passenger, though we never spoke.

I remember the small detached homes located high above Third Street and reached by many stairs, which were replaced almost overnight by the instant ruins of apartment blocks.

I remember the Cockatoo Lounge at the St. Alice Hotel, a tiny room with black velvet paintings framed in bamboo.

I don't remember ever going to the Big O, though I may have been there.

I remember being so shitfaced one time from the green beer at the Coach House that I threw up out the passenger window as we headed down Third Street, the driver nearly as drunk as I was. I remember that that's how we did things then.

I remember when a fellow worker drove me home one morning after the night shift, and we crashed into a taxi at an intersection. I remember how slowly we moved as the car careened into a school fence.

I remember leaving my door ajar when I wasn't home, as a Buddhist might. Coming home one morning after work, I found a stranger sleeping on my bed, who'd just got into town, but whose sister (who lived below me) hadn't come home that night.

I remember this same sister criticizing the use of "man" as a universal term, which was the first time I'd heard that this might be a problem.

I remember one evening being terrified of going mad, and how grateful I was that someone was home at Susan, Michael and Greg's place.

I remember the last lines of Ed Dorn's "Love Song #22": "the world is shit—and I mean all of it."

I remember the man across the hall who'd converted to Islam while in Turkey, and who prayed for forgiveness every night for serving meat and alcohol at Mr. Mike's.

I remember paying \$72 per month for rent in 1976.

I remember living directly across the street from Presentation House before it was Presentation House, in a house of which no trace remains.

I remember walking up past the Dome Grocery for another Sunday family dinner.

I remember attending Pierre's opening at Presentation House Gallery, and seeing his painting there entitled *In Memory of My Feelings*, after a poem by Frank O'Hara that I already knew and loved.

I remember Pierre, on being asked to describe his political position, replying that he was a communist in politics.

I remember thinking that I was an anarchist, without having read any anarchist literature.

I remember couples dancing at parties with the women sitting on their partners' hips, arms and legs wrapped around their lovers' bodies—vertical sex, or nearly.

I remember waking up one morning and realizing that my hand was covered in dried blood, then looking in the mirror and seeing that my face, too, was covered in blood. I remember my astonishment on realizing, only then, that Mette was a virgin. I still remember how her thigh felt in my hand, like no other since.

I remember the first time I bought a punk rock record, and how transgressive this felt. I remember that it was *Teenage Depression*, by Eddie and the Hot Rods.

I remember how utterly strange Patti Smith and the Talking Heads sounded on first hearing them.

“Bless my soul what's wrong with me? / I forgot to forget to remember.”

I remember how our dog would sometimes escape when off his leash, to run up over the Upper Levels to where my brother used to live; and that he would always

be found there waiting patiently for Jim's return.

I remember the scent that Linda Johnstone wore behind her ears, which could only be detected in an embrace. I remember how thrilling this was.

I remember crossing on the Seabus one evening to meet Helga for dinner and smiling in sympathy at a man whose companions were acting like idiots. I remember my intense embarrassment when I realized that he thought I was coming on to him.

I remember the musky scent of Janet Cotgrave's body, which drove me so crazy with desire that I had to put an end to our friendship. I remember, years later, how off-putting I found this same scent, though it hadn't changed at all.

I remember when Don McGinnis cut his throat.

I remember all this as if it happened at night, though it didn't always.

I remember Janice Harris, Karen Metcalfe, Daryl Rasmussen, Cathy Enquist, Holly Beaumont, Rob Youds, Steve Rive, Jim McDonald, Janet Cotgrave, Don McGinnis, Stuart Morris, Lois Redman, Michael Armstrong, Susan Benton, Greg Johnson, James Roberts, Duncan Brown, Bill Bell, and Linda Johnstone among the companions of that time, and the faces and gestures of many others whose names I've since forgotten.

I remember leaving the North Shore for the further shore in the summer of 1978.

*Je me souviens*

The sequence is modeled on the 'I Remember' exercise invented by the American artist Joe Brainard and first published (as *I Remember*) in 1970, which was then taken up by Georges Perec (*Je me souviens*), Harry Mathews ("The Orchard"), and by many others since (including George Bowering in *The Moustache*, his memoir of Greg Curnoe). Brainard's, Perec's and Mathews' texts all have different emphases—as does mine, which is oriented to the remembered experience of living in two homes in the lower Lonsdale area in the mid- to late- 1970s, before I left the North Shore for Vancouver and points beyond.







## GARY GEDDES / Bridging the Narrows: Notes on Falsework

On June 17, 1958, the Second Narrows Bridge collapsed during construction, taking the lives of eighteen workers and, later, a diver. At the time, I was working on the waterfront at BC Sugar Refinery loading boxcars with 100-pound sacks of white sugar, so the news did not take long to reach me.

. . . God, it was blue, the sky  
a currency even the poor could bank  
on. We'd ordered our usual, eggs  
over-easy, with an extra side of toast,  
when the first of five ambulances  
shrieked past. It was difficult to imagine  
disaster on such a day, the birds  
singing hallelulia on the wires, clouds  
on strike, growing things amazed  
by their own virtuosity, operatic,  
playing the clown. The radio, having  
kept its counsel, suddenly belted out  
the news, interrupting a ballad  
by Crosby, something about dreams  
dancing. We piled into the street  
and moved en masse to the waterfront,  
holding our breath, daring our eyes.

I learned later that my father, a former navy diver, had been called out to search for bodies in the wreckage. For decades, I carried the image of him dangling from an umbilical cord of oxygen in that cauldron of swirling water and twisted metal. I recall the shock and disbelief I felt as I ran towards the pier at Buckerfield Seeds to see for myself the collapsed bridge. The huge girders that moments before had pushed out boldly across Burrard Inlet were now mangled and sloped down

into the water. A flotilla of small boats was converging on the spot to pick up bodies and survivors. There was nothing I could do, so I returned to my job and the mountain of sugar sacks at the refinery. But I would never again look at a new building, a bridge, or an overpass under construction without that almost imperceptible catch in the breathing that playwrights identify in their scripts as “a beat.”

Years later, in 1998, I had just moved back to the west coast from Montreal, and I was able to visit the scene of the disaster, to drive and walk across the bridge, and to consider how I might write about the disaster. Four years later I read a review of Tom Berger’s memoir, *One Man’s Justice: A Life in the Law*, which mentions his defence of the ironworkers who had brought the rebuilt Second Narrows Bridge almost to completion before taking legal strike action. The strike was declared illegal. They had the choice of going back to work or facing contempt of court charges. This was a part of the bridge story I did not know. I purchased a copy and quickly located the chapter entitled “A Bridge Too Far.”

This proved to be a turning-point in my research. I read Berger’s account of defending the striking ironworkers under impossible circumstances, a neophyte lawyer facing a crusty old judge with a reputation for being short-tempered and hardly sympathetic to union members. Justice Manson was patronizing in the extreme, dismissing the young whippersnapper defending the worker’s right to strike. Manson wanted them back on the job, claiming that the bridge was dangerous in its present condition. Doubtless, he was concerned about the interests of his cronies at Dominion Bridge and Swan Wooster & Associates, the consulting engineers. Berger politely pointed out that if the bridge was unsafe for the citizens of Vancouver, it would be equally unsafe for the workers returning to the job. After all, your honour, it had already collapsed once.

I met Tom Berger for lunch. He was still working, long after official retirement, and had offices in the Marine Building, one of my favourite structures in the city, an art deco affair with a fringe of icing around the roof that looks like snow. Berger, lively and gracious, insisted on buying me lunch and offered to lend me his personal copy of the court proceedings, which arrived at my house at French Beach a day later by priority post, with the note: “Return this when you’re finished. All of my stuff goes to the archives at UBC, in due course.” Although the court case had taken place more than a year after the bridge collapse, it presented

me with evidence of a continuing saga and, most importantly, the names and recorded comments (angry, ironic, deliberately uncooperative) of some of the surviving ironworkers.

Berger's enthusiasm for the project gave me the nudge I needed to make contact with the surviving ironworkers, but this might not have happened so quickly without the intervention of Tom Evans, a filmmaker and social activist. Tom had interviewed Berger a few weeks after I did. When I called him from a cell phone at Ogden Point and asked if we could meet, he inquired, "Where are you?" "I'm on the beach at Kits," I said, adding that I was not far from the Maritime Museum. "I'll meet you at the dock there in ten minutes." As I stood on the dock checking out the antique vessels, I heard my name shouted. Gliding between the breakwater and the float was a small fibreglass sloop with two figures in the stern, both waving. I grabbed a line amidships, stepped aboard and we were off again, introductions made over the noise of the outboard motor.

Tom Evans invited me to accompany him to the annual memorial service on June 17, 2005, where I met retired bridge foreman Lou Lessard, who gave a rousing speech to the assembled group; Donnie Geisser, whose father Charley had been operating the crane when the bridge collapsed; Charlie Guttman, the son of Erich Guttman who was arrested and jailed briefly during the subsequent strike; and Barrie Doyle, brought down from a job in Kelowna to help dismantle the bridge, and who would become the unofficial archivist of the disaster. After the speeches and the laying of wreaths at the memorial—a cement and marble monument carrying the names of those killed on the bridge—several of us went for beers to a familiar hangout on Hastings Street. These introductions were exactly what I needed.

Although I tape-recorded my interviews with ironworkers, engineers, lawyers and union employees, I never had to go back and listen to them. The rhythms of their speech remained fixed in my mind. Some of the stories required less tinkering than others. Many of the men experienced similar feelings as they fell, so I had to push them a little to elicit the less rehearsed details. But after several months there were still large gaps in the narrative, and at that point, fictional voices began to enter: a Vancouver lawyer whose father was killed on the bridge, an injured ironworker with a very different kind of story to tell, a woman trying to deal with her resentment at being widowed, a returning veteran who would

have preferred the study of mushrooms, but took up ironwork instead. In several cases, the manufactured “voice” felt more real, more authentic, to me than the ones I’d recorded, perhaps because I was not inhibited by fact or by a sense of responsibility to the individual I’d interviewed.

By the time of writing, I’d read enough poetry, including Hart Crane’s “The Bridge” and Adrienne Rich’s “Diving into the Wreck,” to be alerted to the welter of symbols in the swirling waters of the Second Narrows and to sense in that partially submerged memory more than a faint hint of possibility. Writing, too, I had to admit, is a form of *falsework*, a temporary support structure like that used to build bridges, something we depend on to take us part way towards the truth.

The process had its surprises, especially as the role of my father began to surface at regular intervals. His involvement with the bridge disaster had been useful in introducing me to ironworkers, but no one I interviewed, including divers, remembered him or could verify his presence at the bridge on June 17, 1958 or any day thereafter. Had my father really been involved or had he cooked up the story? As I restructured *Falsework*, my father and the notion of

fathering assumed a larger significance, to the point where the manuscript ended with a meditation about truth and reliability, in art as in life, and with a very personal account of my father’s death.

It was not an ending I could have anticipated when I began writing *Falsework*, but it seemed to shift the question of responsibility—for safety, for honesty, for caring, for meticulous recording—from the anonymous institutions of government and corporations, back to the individuals who do the dirty work and who sign off on documents, including works of imagination.



## REZA NAGHIBI / North Van Farsi

My mother calls me to pick up the items for my *Haf-Seen* to display at my new place. It is close to New Year. With a week or so of school left, I don't have the time to celebrate anything, but essay or no essay, I have to go.

At my parents' place off Delbrook, I pick up the items for my No-Rooz spread (*Haf-Seen*). My mom has set out two identical parcels—one for my brother, one for me. No one's home so I'm left to my thoughts . . . the spread is analogous to the Christmas tree, but with seven individual items, all starting with the Farsi character equivalent to the English "S." A week before New Year, the *Haf-Seen* spread is displayed to set the mood for celebration. *No-Rooz* means a "New Day." I carefully examine my spread for compositional integrity. Near-dormant memories of my parents explaining the items' significance come to mind . . . . Wheat stands for rebirth; flour and sugar, the sweetness of life; a coin, prosperity; dried lotus fruit, love; garlic, health; sumac berries, warmth; vinegar, patience; eggs, fertility; mirror, reflection; goldfish in a bowl, life.

Later, on the last Wednesday of the year, driving by Ambleside Park I see crowds jumping over fires. Because spirits visit the living on the last day of the year, the living must jump fire to cleanse themselves in honour of the visitation, to prepare for the new year and the longer days, and to celebrate the beginning of spring.

This year the Iranian New Year is Thursday March 20th at 4:43am, Vancouver-time. We will enter the year 1388. It's midnight as text messages start to come in wishing me a happy *No-Rooz*. My mother gestures with a nod for me to carry a platter of some rice dish to the table. And then another. And another. Ten of us sit down for the late supper and begin to mound plates with heaps of everything. My mom has cooked two fish; I have no idea what kind but they're about a foot and a half, silver, and delicious. *Sabzi polo* is a dish of cooked rice with coriander, dill, parsley, scallions, and chives. We eat and talk about what we should appreciate. Stories spanning experiences over about sixty years are shared, discussed, and mused over. My uncle tells jokes and for my two cousins who are shabbier at Farsi than I am, I translate the jokes word for word. The punch line in translation works on one, fails on the others. With my sub par Farsi skills I listen to my uncle recite some of his favourite poems and try and translate them into English for me

and for my cousins. I heap a second helping of *Sabzi polo* and *mahi* for my uncle as his poems have distracted him from his empty plate. He tries to feign no interest in another helping but I insist. My aunt is secretly doing the same thing to my plate. I turn to her and receive a squeeze of the cheek.

Oh, deliciousness in the form of rice with saffron, parsley for the palette, stews of spinach and celery and chickpeas, chutney so sour your eyes can't help but squint. On our New Year's Eve, as on any night, the rules are simple: there's never too little to share, guests have the biggest plate, we stand to welcome guests who have just arrived and insist they have second helpings, thirds if they can manage it. But the tradition of staying up for this is wearing thin—two cousins are falling asleep. A conversation about freedoms between an uncle and his eldest son is another sign of this Canadian-Iranian scene. Closer to the countdown we gather by the TV in the kitchen so we can help with dishes and eat the traditional rice pudding dessert. My sleeping cousins are roused for the countdown. At 4:43am we hug, and kiss, and shout. Every person accounted for is given a kiss per cheek and a big hug. We clink our glasses, make toasts, mention who's missed, and have a good time.

At my parents' house are traditional rugs—books of Persian poetry on one and *Payvand* newspapers on another. The standard phenotypic manifestations typify my appearance: dark hair, eyes, skin, and a nose capable of proficient respiration even in the worst sandstorm, but not much else will give away where I'm from. My name "Reza" is replaced by the assimilation-friendly sobriquet, "Ryan," my brother "Ali" by "Alex". At my apartment, Optimus Prime sits on one wall, photos of cars on another, a *Raging Bull* poster on another. My parents wonder if I'll settle down with a "nice Iranian girl." I wonder if I will pass the culture on to my children. Answers will offer themselves, no doubt. For good or bad remains to be seen, but two cultures in the same room this New Year seems like nothing but good.

## ANDREW KLOBUCAR / Moodyville: Tweet This, Digg it, Add to del.icio.us, Stumble it.

Aside from official government Web sites like North Vancouver's city site and various tourist industry portals like North Vancouver Hotel.ca or Trip Advisor.com, Moodyville's electronic presence is yet meagre. Very few of the world's digerati tirelessly tweeting, blogging or simply recording the sounds and sights of their immediate surroundings have turned their lenses, flip cams and keyboards to either of the two municipalities (district or city) legally identified as "North Vancouver." As a search term on YouTube, "North Vancouver" produces similarly scant results. The most prolific of North Van's potential videographers appears to be "Kimchiman1000," who, using a small video cam attached to his helmet, records his work emptying industrial-sized waste bins around the North Shore.<sup>1</sup> As one might expect, given the nature of the YouTube medium and its symbolic attachment to the everyday, even a topic as prosaic as waste management has its share of audience loyalty. A fairly popular effort in his ongoing series, eponymously entitled "Six Yard Can at a McDonald's in North Vancouver," provokes a number of encouraging comments, most of them probing the more technical elements of Kimchiman1000's profession. One recent commentator, for example, wants to know what kind of wage a North Van collector can expect to make (\$18-\$22 an hour). Another viewer—an actual resident of the city, or so her moniker "NVanWendy" suggests, cheerily assesses his skills behind the wheel:

"That's impressive! You actually made a left turn on Lynn Valley Road."<sup>2</sup>

Still, if Technorati's charting of popular blog activity on the Web, shown above in Figure 1, demonstrates anything, it is that the region's larger city on the south side of the Burrard Inlet continues to inspire most of the content e-pundits are keen to distribute. Technorati, based in San Francisco, is essentially a second generation or Web 2.0 search engine that not only retrieves electronically published information, but also helps organise it into distinct topic-oriented channels, while quantifying specific trends in distribution.<sup>3</sup> By providing tools of interpretation, Technorati contributes to what theorists of digital culture have called the

<sup>1</sup> Al the Kimchiman, "Kimchiman1000," *YouTube*, 11 February 2007. Video.

<sup>2</sup> NVanWendy, "Comment on Six Yard Can at a McDonald's in North Vancouver," dir. Kimchiman1000," *YouTube* (September 2008). Web.

<sup>3</sup> "Welcome to Technorati," *Technorati*. Web.

spatialisation of electronic knowledge, constructing, in effect, a kind of visual model of the constant flow of online information. Transformed into a line graph, data from Vancouver's bloggers (the top line) simulates its own mountain vista, complete with significant dips and peaks in Web bustle as enacted over the course of a single week. In comparison, the same period in North Vancouver (the bottom line) barely manages a molehill. Slight rises in activity can be seen during the 25th and over the course of the weekend of the 29th, faint pulses on an otherwise terminally flat cardiograph.

Where Vancouver's bloggers number in the hundreds, it seems only a few individuals are giving Moodyville any electronic presence. The small bump on the last weekend in March derives primarily from "live blogger" Miss604's efforts perched above the stage at the 2009 Juno awards at GM Place 28 March 2009. Miss604 is the brand name under which Rebecca Bollwitt has chosen to promote her work as a professional blogger/social media consultation service, a trade of mounting importance in the increasingly interconnected fields of social media networking and electronic journalism. "Miss604," aka Bollwitt, specialises in promoting mainstream entertainment events in the Vancouver region, using her site to host liveblogs, podcasts, Webcasts and various discussion forums. Her husband John also contributes to the profession (and accordingly Vancouver's electronic pulse) via his own blog "JohnBollwitt.com"—which that same weekend reported on the region's participation in Earth Day 2009.

As a relatively new content category on the Web, live blogging falls somewhat chaotically between the genres of street reporting and personal diary entry, between journalism and the journal, bluntly mixing the defining gestures of both formats into its own open-ended concoction. The current lack of rhetorical guidelines informing the practice of live blogging is no doubt due to its immediate origins in advances in wireless computing rather than any concerted effort to organise new literary or aesthetic objectives. We see in the liveblog, in other words, a convergence in technological formats without much critical reflection on the construction of content. Hence encountering a liveblog report tends to instill in readers the strangely mottled sensation of consuming public discourse, while having unwittingly stumbled upon several ongoing intimate conversations between strangers. Miss604 handled the Junos as one would expect any entertainment journalist to manage Canada's primary award ceremony for the music industry; the bands, the product, the wardrobes and the gossip behind them all are efficiently delivered in sound byte fashion down the centre of the blog's home page. The

margins, however, provide concurrent snatches of personal dialogue between other live bloggers at the same event, effecting a kind of meta-commentary on the very practice of live blogging while being engaged in it. One might consider such elements as secondary to the journalism inspiring them; yet, in the context of considering North Vancouver as a node on a much wider information grid, far from offering less valuable data on the event at hand, it is exactly these more intimate elements in the report that help categorise Miss604's content as especially relevant to the city. Much of the discussion and commentary on Miss604 arrives courtesy of fellow blogger Arieanna Foley, reporting on the event on her own site *Blogaholics*, which is based in North Vancouver where she lives. Foley is also a professional blogger, contributing to dozens of blogs on the Web and working as channel editor for B5Media's "Celebrities & Entertainment" selections. In this way, Foley's personal association with North Vancouver appears as one more attribute in hers and Miss604's respective event reports, an extra byte of context transcribed across networks via tagging and search terms.

Thus we find on the Web a curious echo of North Vancouver's current economic, political, and cultural relationship to its other shoreline: exurban, private, marginal—in short, primarily a source of commentary to the principal database we symbolically identify as the city of Vancouver. The very fact that a single set of location-based tags can affect the overall electronic presence of a particular community testifies to the general lack of online content being produced there. When no one is chatting in a set room, a single voice can seem almost overbearingly loud. On the other hand, the activity of live blogging categorically opens up new connections between information topics and some of the material or technical factors informing their distribution—allowing any and all smaller communities more potential agency in their own representation and subsequent interpretation. Just as technological advances in typography contributed historically to the evolution of constructivist and concrete-style experiments in modernist poetry, developments in information technology appear poised to transform just how information itself is to be defined. Meta-tags in content remind us that the verbal message in an electronic document, the one appearing on screen before our eyes, provides just one layer of interpretation among many. The code, the scripts, the myriad visual, aural and tactile elements that make up a digital work evoke a much more dynamic, phenomenologically complex textual experience; and therein lies Moodyville.

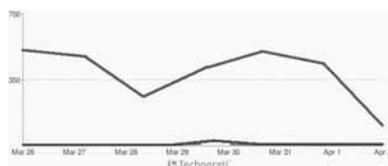


Figure 1. Technorati Chart for Blog Activity on North Vancouver Week of 25 March to 2 April 2009.



## MOODYVILLE CONTRIBUTORS

NEDA ABKARI was born in Abadan, Iran. Her father, a big influence in her life as a poet, introduced her to poetry and classical literature. They used to read Hafiz for at least half an hour every day. Neda published three books of poetry in Iran—*Tajrobeh Hayeh Ghameh Rostan*, *Az Raheh Sayeha*, and *Haraseh Amadaneh Sobh*. The last book is also translated into Swedish. Neda lives with her daughters in North Vancouver and is a student at UBC.

ANDREA ANDERSON is a fundraiser and writer living in Vancouver. Excerpts from her UBC MA thesis, “Tom Burrows’ Sculpture of Concrete, Sculpture of Dreams or, Looking for the Utopian in the Everyday” (1997) are published here.

INGRID BAXTER, in the years following N.E. Thing Co., founded and owns Deep Cove Canoe and Kayak in North Vancouver (1981 to present). She created the Adaptive Aquatics Specialist position for the City of Vancouver and directed the creation of swim programs for the disabled, including the Berwick Centre’s swim program for developmentally disabled preschoolers. She was a founding member and professional accompanist for the North Shore Chorus for close to 20 years. She has taught piano, canoeing, swimming, and aquasizes.

DAVID BELLMAN (*Xwi7 xwa*) is an art historian and independent research curator. His interdisciplinary research has connected the fields of 19th and 20th century experimental architecture, photography, painting, and sculpture, and is often concerned with the spiritual and material heritage of traditional, non-European societies. His research and curatorial work have been presented in North America and Europe. He often collaborates with Meirion Evans.

MOLLY BOBAK began studying art in 1938 at the Vancouver School of Art where she pursued drawing and painting with instructors Charles Scott and Jack Shadbolt. In 1942 she joined the Canadian Women’s Army Corps and became the first Canadian female war artist. In 1946 she married Bruno Bobak and lived in North Vancouver until 1960 when they moved to Fredericton, New Brunswick where she still resides. She has exhibited widely and her artwork is included in private and public collections, including the National Gallery of Canada.

JIM BREUKELMAN lives in West Vancouver. He received a BFA in photography at the Rhode Island School of Design and taught photography at Emily Carr Institute from 1967 to 2000. Breukelman has been a significant influence on the development of artists of photography in Vancouver. For over four decades, he has had many exhibitions across Canada, most recently solo exhibitions at the Richmond Art Gallery and Republic Gallery, and his work is in various public and private collections. He is represented by Republic Gallery, Vancouver.

COLIN BROWNE is a writer and filmmaker living in Vancouver. His most recent book is *The Shovel* (Talon-books). “Kingfisher Annex,” of which this is an excerpt, is a prelude to the text for a longer dramatic work, perhaps an oratorio, entitled *The Kingfisher*. The action in *The Kingfisher* begins where “Kingfisher Annex” leaves off, at dawn on May 28th, 1938, under the northern ramp of the Lion’s Gate Bridge, and concerns the life and times of David Bolster. The three-line cinched stanzas of “Kingfisher Annex” are used only in this prelude, which seems to have become a postlude as well.

KARIN BUBAŠ, originally from North Vancouver, is a graduate of Emily Carr University. She has exhibited nationally and internationally, most notably in Montreal, Washington DC, and Brussels. Exhibitions include solo exhibitions at Monte Clark Gallery, *About Time* at the Canadian Embassy in Washington DC; *The Power Of Reflection* at the Saidye Bronfman Centre for the Arts, Montreal; and *The Tree: From the Sublime to the Social* at the Vancouver Art Gallery. She is represented by the Monte Clark Gallery, Vancouver/Toronto.

TREVOR CAROLAN writes from Deep Cove and teaches at UFV in Abbotsford. His current work is *Another Kind of Paradise: Short Stories from the New Asia-Pacific* (Boston: Cheng & Tsui, 2009).

PIERRE COUPEY was a founding co-editor of *The Georgia Straight* and founding editor of *The Capilano Review*. Gallery Jones represents his work in Vancouver, where his next solo show takes place in Spring 2010. His work will be included in a five-person group show of new abstraction at the Kelowna Art Gallery in Fall 2010.

PETER CULLEY lives in South Wellington, British Columbia, and his books include *The Climax Forest*, *Hammertown*, *The Age of Briggs & Stratton: Hammertown Book Two* and *To the Dogs*.

MEIRION EVANS (*Nexw Slulum Ta Ensgi Pim*) is a documentary filmmaker, television producer, and independent research curator. His mass media work concerning cross-cultural themes has been commissioned and realized in collaboration with the BBC and S4C Wales; his independent practice has been showcased at the Festival of Documentary Films on Art, Centre Pompidou, Paris. He often collaborates with David Bellman.

ALISON FROST is a writer from Brooklin, Ontario, whose fiction has appeared in several literary journals. She is in the latter stages of work on her first manuscript of short fiction. Alison lives in East Vancouver with her husband, dog, and twin cats.

BRIAN GANTER teaches literature and critical theory in the Capilano University English department and CultureNet program. During the daytime working hours North Van has a tangible, determinate, and material existence for him. However, at the end of the working day, North Van enters an ethereal, hazy, and immaterial state of being from the view of his back window, as the illuminated Grouse Mountain ski resort detaches from the earth and quietly floats in the darkness.

GARY GEDDES has published more than thirty-five books and won a dozen national and international literary awards, including the Gabriela Mistral Prize and the Lt-Governor's Award for Literary Excellence. He is working on a book about human rights in sub-Saharan Africa.

CHRISTOPHER GLEN grinds some, along with a lot of others. His times are getting slower, such is time. His best time mattered an awful lot to him, at the time, matters less now, and matters not a monkey to the good reader let alone the indifferent one.

BABAK GOLKAR lives in North Vancouver and has an MFA from UBC. His multidisciplinary practice includes performance, installation, drawing, and video. Golkar has exhibited extensively both nationally and internationally at venues such as the Bergen Kunsthalle, Bergen; Liu Haisu Museum, Taipei; Morris and Helen Belkin Gallery, Vancouver; and the Belkin Satellite, Vancouver. He recently participated in the group exhibition *Orientalism and Ephemera* at Centre A, Vancouver.

MIKE GRILL is a self-taught Vancouver photographer who was born in North Vancouver. He has had solo exhibitions in Vancouver, most recently at CSA Gallery and Jeffrey Boone Gallery, and has been recently published in local magazines *Subterrain* and *Ripe*. He is represented by Jeffrey Boone Gallery, Vancouver.

STEVEN HARRIS teaches art history at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, and has published on surrealism and other twentieth-century art and cultural movements. He was a student editor of *The Capilano Review* before and during the period recollected in these memoirs.

LEE HENDERSON is the author of an award-winning short story collection *The Broken Record Technique* and the novel *The Man Game*. He is a contributing editor to the art magazines *Border Crossings* and *Contemporary* and has published fiction and art criticism in numerous periodicals. His fiction has twice been featured in the *Journey Prize Anthology*. He lives in Vancouver.

ANNETTE HURTIG is an independent curator and writer based on Hornby Island. She intermittently takes curatorial and directorial work within public institutions elsewhere. Active internationally and known for initiating and managing ambitious, nationally touring exhibitions and accompanying publications, she is currently Interim Curator at the Kamloops Art Gallery.

ANNE KIPLING has received wide recognition for her drawings, which have been acquired by many public art museums in Canada, including the National Gallery of Canada. In 1962, after graduating from the Vancouver School of Art, she moved to Lynn Valley, North Vancouver, where she lived until 1965. During this time she purchased a small etching press and taught herself drypoint, etching, and aquatint. Her career was the subject of a major Vancouver Art Gallery exhibition and publication in 1995.

ROBERT KLEYN is a Canadian architect, visual artist, and writer. He began making photo-conceptual and video works in Vancouver in the early 1970s, and has shown his artwork in North America and Europe. He apprenticed as an architect in Rome and studied architecture at UBC. His writings have been published in art magazines *Z/G*, *Tema Celeste*, *Arts*, *Vanguard*, and in numerous exhibition catalogues. He has taught at several universities and practices in Vancouver as Robert Kleyn Architect, specializing in art gallery and cultural projects.

ANDREW KLOBUCAR is a Vancouver based writer who prefers cell phones to bear bells when hiking the North Vancouver trails. He writes on programmable literary practices and screen poetics and works full-time in the English Department at Capilano University. In 2008, he joined the faculty of the New Jersey Institute of Technology in Newark, NJ to help direct their Communication and Media programme. Recent essays have appeared in *Crayon* (Fall 2008) and *Leonardo Electronic Almanac* (2009). A forthcoming article on Bob Perelman will appear in the Fall issue of *Jacket*. In 1999, he co-edited with Mike Barnholden the poetry anthology *Writing Class* (New Star), detailing the work and ideas of the Kootenay School of Writing between the years 1983 and 1992.

AURELEA MAHOOD 's great great uncle had a dairy farm near the Capilano River where her grandfather helped out as a boy. The dairy farm was long gone by the time she was born at Lions Gate Hospital. She teaches in the English Department at Capilano University and is a TCR board member. Her own current work is exploring representations of technology and transportation—perhaps even bicycles—in late modernist fiction.

KYLA MALLET is a Vancouver artist whose work has been widely exhibited. Since receiving an MFA from the University of British Columbia in 2005, her work has been included in exhibitions at ThreeWalls, Chicago; the Vancouver Public Library and at the Vancouver Art Gallery. Her recent solo exhibition *Marginalia* at Artspeak, Vancouver—accompanied by the publication *An Art of the Weak: Marginalia, Writers, and Readers*—traveled to Halifax, N.S.

DAPHNE MARLATT's long poem in prose fragments, *The Given* (McClelland & Stewart, 2008), the third in her trilogy beginning with *Ana Historic* and *Taken*, won the 2009 Dorothy Livesay Poetry Award. *Between Brush Strokes*, a limited-edition poem about the life and work of the BC painter/poet Sveva Caetani, designed by Frances Hunter, was released from JackPine Press (Saskatoon) late in 2008. It has received an Alcuin Award for design. In 2009, Talonbooks will publish "The Gull," her contemporary Canadian Noh play, in a bilingual edition with photographs from the 2006 Pangaea Arts Production.

STEPHEN MILLER has lived in Vancouver since 1968 when he came to UBC from North Carolina to get an MA in Creative Writing. He has made a living as an actor on stage and screen, and is recognized locally as Zack McNab on DaVinci's Inquest. His most recent novel, *The Last Train to Kazan* was published last summer by Penguin Canada. For more information, readers are invited to visit his website: [stephenmillerwriter.com](http://stephenmillerwriter.com).

REZA NAGHIBI is a student in Creative Writing at Capilano University and he looks forward to a career as a writer. He has published in the student newspaper *The Capilano Courier* and is a new reader of *The Capilano Review*.

KEITH NAHANEE (*Kwetsimet*) is a Squamish Nation artist/cultural worker living in North Vancouver who began weaving at the age of twenty. Inspired initially by the traditional knowledge and skills of a great aunt, he has subsequently become a pioneer in reviving the function and sustaining the value of both spiritual and material culture within the context of contemporary First Nations culture. Nahanee is now widely recognized for his contribution of sacred masks and over a hundred ceremonial blankets. His work is permanently installed in the Great Hall of the Squamish Lil'wat Cultural Centre in Whistler. His weavings will be featured in an upcoming PHG exhibition about topographical photography and Salish weaving.

AL NEIL is a Vancouver artist, composer, pianist, and writer whose activities have spanned six decades. He became a central figure in the Vancouver jazz scene in the 1950s and during the 1960s became known for solo and ensemble performances which combined music with texts, art assemblages, slides, and prepared tapes. His collage works have been exhibited extensively and are in museum collections. His books include *Changes* (1989), *West Coast Lokas* (1972), *Slammer* (1981), and the exhibition catalogue *Origins* (1989). He has toured and exhibited internationally, and lives in Dollarton, Vancouver. In 2003, he was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Letters from Emily Carr Institute. "Laughter on 3<sup>rd</sup> Street" was published in *Slammer* in 1981 by Pulp Press and is reprinted here with their permission.

N.E. THING CO. was a corporate enterprise with headquarters in North Vancouver developed by co-presidents Ingrid Baxter and Iain Baxter to pursue experimental art activities and various business ventures as conceptual art. Founded in 1966, N.E. Thing Co. was incorporated in 1969 and participated in important exhibitions and publications nationally and internationally until it ceased in 1976. Their projects included an office environment as an exhibition at the National Gallery of Canada (1969), the sponsoring of a pee-wee hockey team (1972), and the operation of a restaurant named Eye Scream (1977). N.E. Thing Co. continues to be internationally recognized in major exhibitions, publications, and museum collections.

SELWYN PULLAN has been based in North Vancouver since the early 1950s and has operated as a commercial photographer with a focus on architecture. His photographs have become important documents of the development of modern west coast architecture. He studied photography

at the Art Centre in Los Angeles and after graduating returned to Vancouver where he published in magazines such as *Western Homes and Living*, *Canadian Homes*, and *Canadian Interiors*. An exhibition of his photographs was held at the West Vancouver Museum in 2008.

LISA ROBERTSON's *Magenta Soul Whip* was recently published by Coach House Books; *R's Boat* will be out with University of California Press in 2010. Robertson currently works collaboratively on sound and video based works, with Allyson Clay, Nathalie Stephens, and Stacy Doris.

CHRISTOPHER OLSON is a Vancouver-based artist and writer. He is a frequent contributor to *Border Crossings*, *Vancouver Review*, *Front*, and *Color* and has recently completed solo shows at Plank and Blim in Vancouver and group shows in Vancouver, Winnipeg, and Toronto. He is currently completing *Everything Louder Than Everything Else*, a web-based project through Helen Pitt ARC.

AARON PECK is the author of the novel *The Bewilderments of Bernard Willis*. His art writing has recently appeared in *Canadian Art*, *Fillip*, and *Matador*. He lives in Vancouver, BC.

SHARLA SAVA received her doctorate from Simon Fraser University's School of Communication. She has lectured, curated exhibitions, and published a variety of articles about art after modernism, discussing the works of Ray Johnson, Jeff Wall, Antonia Hirsch, and Damian Moppett, among others. She has taught art history, visual culture, and media studies, and is currently on faculty at Capilano University. The conversation about North Vancouver culture was coordinated by Sharla.

JEREMY SHAW is a Berlin-based Vancouver artist who grew up in Deep Cove and graduated from Emily Carr University. His solo exhibitions include the Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art, Toronto; Cherry and Martin, Los Angeles; Blanket Gallery, Vancouver; and Galaria dels Angels, Barcelona. He has participated in group exhibitions at Witte de With, Rotterdam; Lisson Gallery, London; Henry Art Gallery, Seattle; Monitor, Rome; CCA, Glasgow; and in numerous film festivals. As recording artist Circlesquare, Shaw has performed internationally and has numerous single and album releases. He is represented by Blanket Gallery, Vancouver.

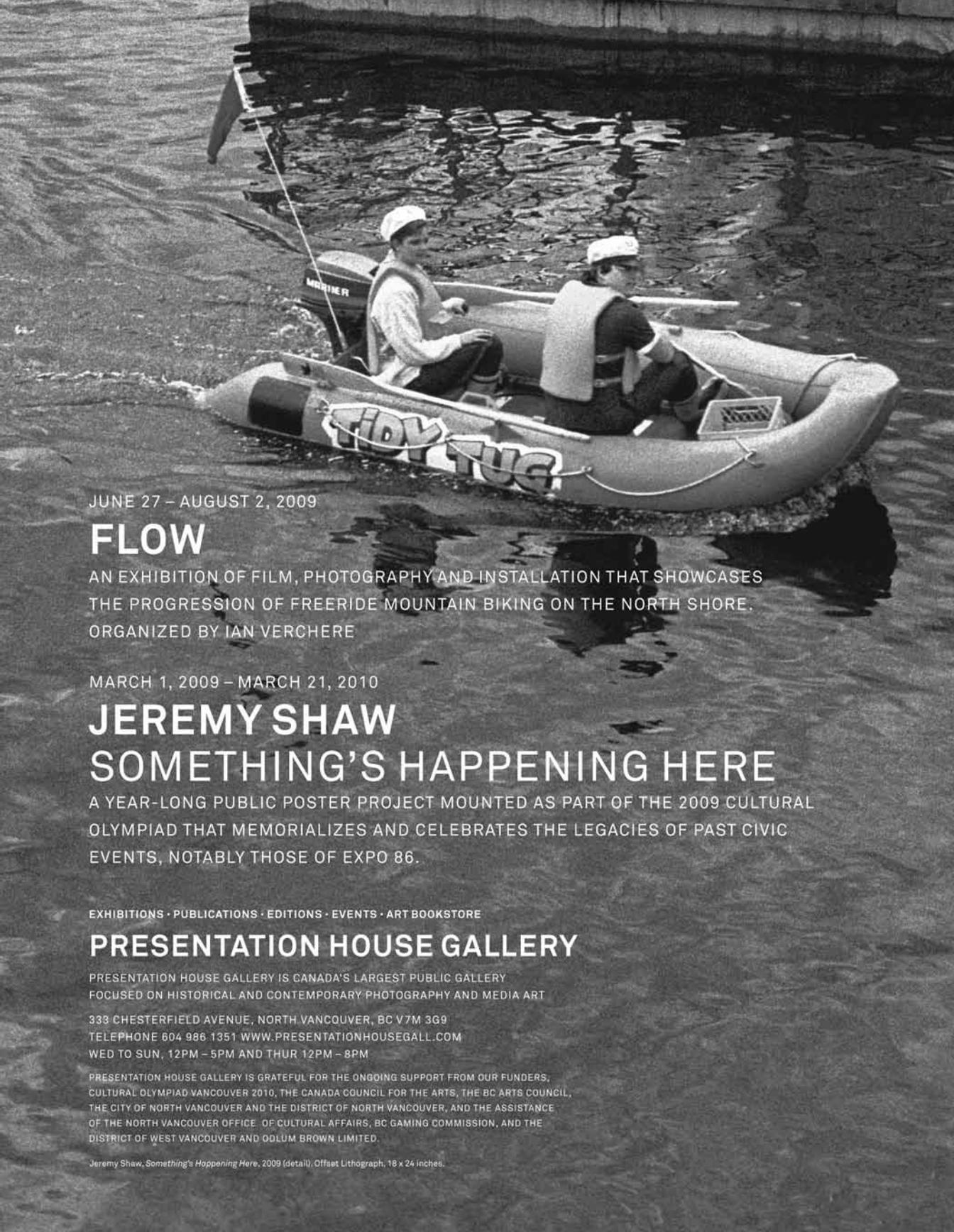
DAN SINEY was born in North Vancouver and graduated from Emily Carr University in Vancouver in 2003. He has since exhibited at Spencer Brownstone Gallery, New York; Collette, Paris; La Santa, Barcelona; Campbell Works, London; and Go Gallery, Milan. Siney's works have also been featured in magazines and publications such as *Vice Magazine*, *Sunday Magazine*, *Ripe*, *Border Crossings*, and *C Magazine*.

SXÁALTXW-T-SIYÁM, LOUIS MIRANDA was born in 1892 and served as a chief of the Squamish band for close to 50 years. He received an honorary doctorate from Simon Fraser University in recognition of his work on a two-volume study of the Squamish language. The present work is from an unpublished oral history of Moodyville transcribed and abridged by Squamish Nation Department of Education: Skwétsatenáat, Valerie Moody, Vanessa Campbell, and Snitelwet, Deborah Jacobs.

JAMIE TOLAGSON lives in Victoria, BC. His work has been shown in solo exhibitions at CSA Space and Jeffrey Boone Gallery, and group exhibitions at the Toronto International Art Fair and the Vancouver Film Centre, and has been published in *Canadian Art*, *The Globe & Mail*, and *Doppleganger Magazine*. In 2007, he collaborated with Christopher Brayshaw, Adam Harrison, and Evan Lee on a year-long online photography project entitled "Four."

MICHAEL TURNER's fiction includes *Hard Core Logo*, *The Pornographer's Poem* and *8x10*. Most recently he contributed an essay, "Expanded Literary Practices, 1954-1969" to the anthology *Ruins in Process: Vancouver Art in the Sixties*.

IAN WALLACE is a Vancouver artist who spent his youth on the North Shore. Since the mid-1960s, his significant contributions to international contemporary art have been widely recognized. The subject of many exhibitions and publications, he recently had three linked survey exhibitions at the Witte de With in Rotterdam, the Kunsthalle in Zürich, and the Kunstverein für die Rheinlande in Dusseldorf, with a major publication on his practice titled *A Literature of Images* (Sternberg Press 2009). He has also been influential as an art teacher and critic. In Vancouver Ian Wallace is represented by Catriona Jeffries Gallery.



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Jeremy Shaw, *Something's Happening Here*, 2009 (detail). Offset Lithograph, 18 x 24 inches.

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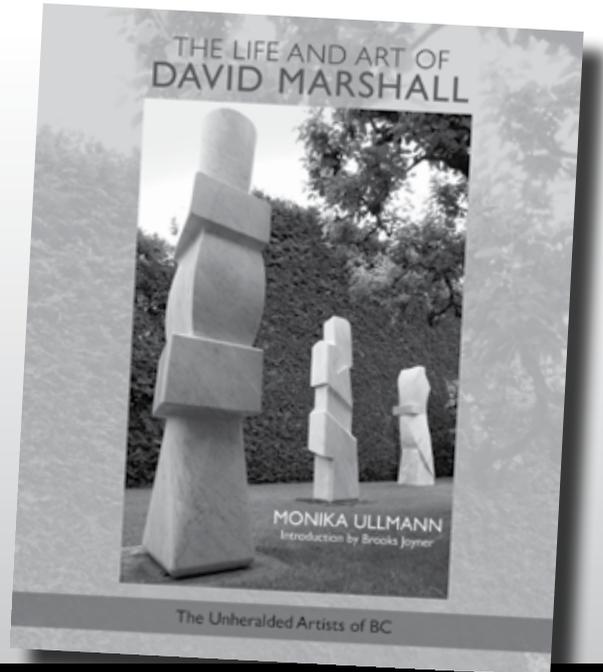
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Marshall was the founder of the Sculpture Program at Capilano University and a respected teacher from 1974 to 1990. For a decade after retirement, he created some of his most important works at Cap College.

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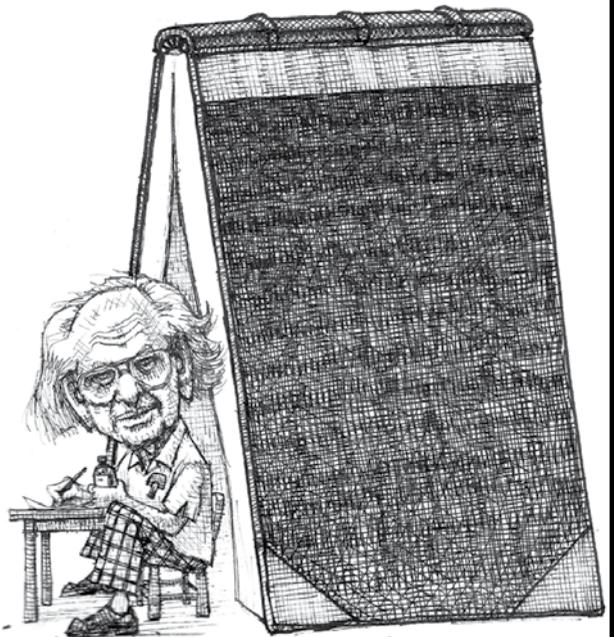
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