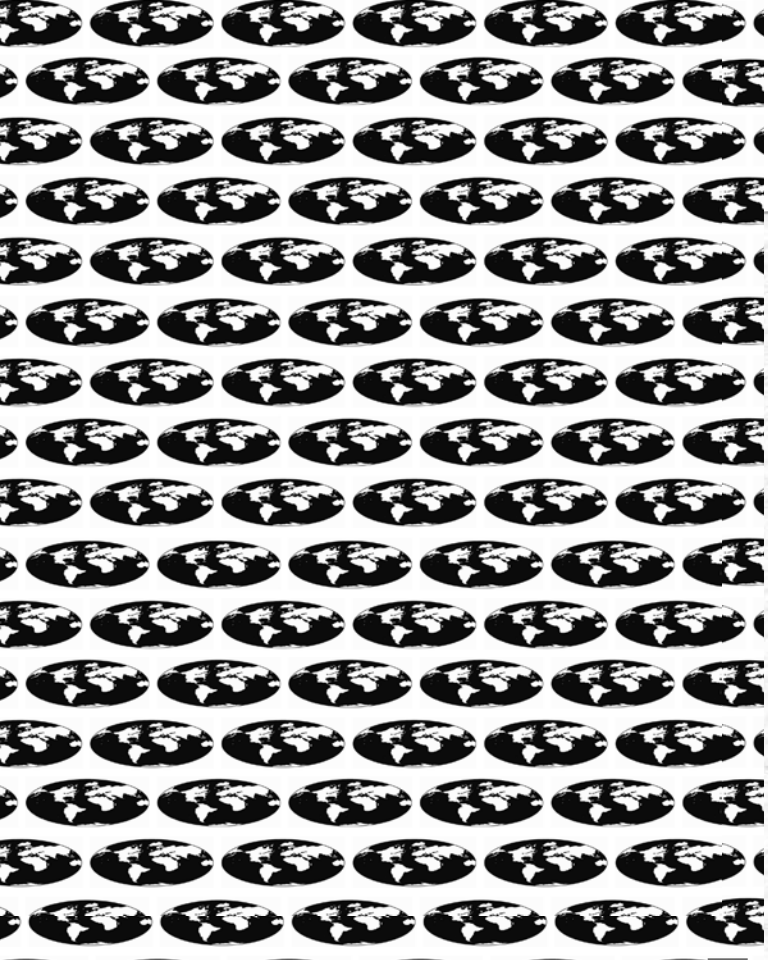


A black t-shirt is shown against a white background. The t-shirt has white text printed on the front. To the right of the t-shirt, a grayscale image of two hands shaking is visible, appearing as if it is emerging from the t-shirt's sleeve.

**I PARTICIPATED IN  
THE WORLD  
PORTABLE  
GALLERY  
CONVENTION  
2012**





WORLD PORTABLE  
GALLERY CONVENTION  
2 0 1 2





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HALIFAX TOKYO LONDON MANILA TORONTO BEIJING PORTLAND

W P G C  
2012







## Introduction

The grand inauguration of The World Portable Gallery Convention 2012 on September 5th occurred between the auspicious bookends of two other conventions of unavoidable hype and power, namely, the Republican and Democratic National Conventions of the United States. This coincidence presented us with a facet—albeit a grotesquely exaggerated facet—of the *raison d'être* of conventions. On one hand, conventions marshal huge resources both for developing their infrastructures and holding events, often paid for by the public.<sup>1</sup> In HRM

(Halifax Regional Municipality), this has meant federal, provincial and municipal government dedicating over \$164 million CAD in a gamble on the construction of a new convention centre—the Nova Centre—generating profits for the city and revitalizing its downtown core, what leaders call “spinoffs.” But on the other hand, the numbers only mask the hidden investments behind these particular events. It can consist, for instance, in the promise of close and private access of corporations to powerful lawmakers (and vice versa), as displayed in the opaque spectacles of American corporatism. This was just a timely reminder of the hegemony that conventions have come to stand for, and why the power of gathering needs to be considered from other angles.



In the earlier stages of planning this project (long before moving Eyelevel’s actual office space into the main gallery as an overly formal convention hall lobby reception desk), we discussed how to convene a variety of people, and about our own roles in the process of selection and invitation; if this were a real *World Convention* of portable galleries, then why not leave it open, why not allow anyone to submit according to their self-initiative?<sup>2</sup> Might there not be an unforeseen encounter, which is in fact a trait of portable galleries as they move around unprepared publics? For a number of reasons, total openness was not the route we took; interested in existing practices that had come into their own formats, as opposed to one-off works tailored to a specific size (say, an exhibition of



xeroxes), we were also less concerned with the postal-centric interests and at times utopian aspirations of mail-art. What makes a gallery a gallery in this case is its consistent returning to a set of presentation methods and scales, and a playing on a developing identity that is different from individual artists'.<sup>3</sup> Of course there is overlap. But there is also a deliberate gesture of role-play involved, that of the gallerist, the museum director, the curator or host. The institutions they represent are modest and mostly run by whatever means are available. However, this scale is often used as a critical reflection of the larger institutions normally referenced by the words gallery, museum, etc., and thus role-play positions one in a mediating capacity, as the embodiment of "bodiless beings."<sup>4</sup> In portable galleries the absurd awkwardness of being a person and speaking for an institution is pushed to its limits, and recuperated.

In initial discussions, we found several issues kept coming up related to the funding systems in Canada, which have been causing consternation among some artists today, and whose bureaucratic imperatives had been remarked on 30 years ago by A.A. Bronson in the seminal and influential book "Museums by Artists."<sup>5</sup> Even the idea of the open-submission mail-in show had the feeling of something illicit, as it appears to ask people for their participation without remuneration according to national standards. But portable galleries are often self-propelled, in any case, revealing a dilemma latent in the project. What does it mean when self-initiated spaces begin to receive funding at legally mandated levels, is it some kind of betrayal of principles? In a more sophisticated formulation, a



question arose during the WPGC 2012 opening artist talk by Paul Hammond and Francesca Tallone: is it the artist-run centre legitimizing the small gallery project, or the small gallery legitimizing the artist-run centre?

Their **Gallery Deluxe Gallery** had been active in an attic crawlspace in their Halifax apartment from 2005 to 2007, and was for WPGC 2012 re-constructed in uncanny detail in Eyelevel, featuring the work of Chris Foster. At the time they closed, they had been considering ways of attaining funding.

Beginning in 2007 and more active until 2010, in a similar use of surplus space, Daniel Joyce, Miriam Moren and Ryan Park had made the **161 Gallon Gallery** out of a small storage closet in the stairwell to their 2nd floor. During an introduction in their living room at the opening of Lukas Pearse's sound installation at 161, Daniel Joyce recounted how they received a letter drawing attention to CARFAC's fee schedules, which seemed somewhat counterintuitive to 161's intentions.

Though not so romantic as it may seem, Halifax's artists have, by nature of the economically challenged region (in the broader sense and in relation to arts funding), become extremely accustomed to making work either about, or with, limited resources. This long-standing characteristic is sometimes a curse, but often a license to detach from the dependency on systems standardizing the work of artists and galleries. In light of just how heavily administrated artist-run spaces have become, comic relief helps clear the air, such as in the **P.R. Rankin Gallery**, initiated by Eyelevel administrators Elizabeth Johnson and

Michael McCormack, which acted simply as an answering machine by which anyone calling Eyelevel was diverted to an invitation to participate by leaving an audio art message after the beep.

There are countless examples where legitimation spells the end of a self-initiative, and no shortage of these is quite willing to make a change for access to more support (in today's startup culture, such scenarios are almost cultishly sought after). On the other hand, just as numerous are the self-initiatives that could no longer be carried on because life had caught up with the protagonists, who had tired of self-supporting, or who had just gone on to other things.



Several of the participants in WPGC 2012 represent a middle way: coming in and out, making temporal compromises, taking breaks and returning when there is an opportunity, or inspiration. None of the participants involved in this project make portable galleries their exclusive work. Indeed, it is also this marginality that gives the small institution some of its power, some of its more lasting characteristics. The **Museum of Mental Objects**, co-instigated by Judy Freya Q. Sibayan, deputized a number of individuals to become museums themselves: institutions to house works accessed by whisper, and unmediated in any other way. This may sound self-effacing, but Sibayan revels in the agency concentrated in being an ex-centric:

“Away from the centre, I set my own values and goals and become my own construction as a subversive. Here, I am free to move ‘away from the language of alienation (otherness) to that of de-centring (difference). Here, the narrative of continuity’ of the white cube ‘is threatened, it is both used and abused, inscribed and subverted.’ Here, the image of the ex-centric is ‘often as deviant as the language of de-centring might suggest.’ Here the image of the ex-centric is that of the fool who speaks truth to power as the off-centre contests narratives of centring; as she makes art in a ‘de-centred world where there is only ex-centricity.’”<sup>6</sup>

In practice, ex-centricity describes the very marginal space of encounter with many portable galleries: on sidewalks, after-hours, by chance, in privacy. **The Velcro Gallery**, by Craig Leonard and co-organized by Beck Osborne, for instance, featured alternating button designs from a number of artists who had responded to an open call. Over the month, whenever Osborne wore the jacket on her daily errands, the gallery was open.

Following a series of WPGC 2012 evening presentations at the Seahorse Tavern—Halifax’s most venerable pub in a bustling night life area directly adjacent the Nova Centre construction site—Valerie LeBlanc and Daniel Dugas brought **MediaPackBoard** to the streets.<sup>7</sup> Consisting of a closed-circuit shoulder-mounted television monitor streaming live footage from a pole-mounted video camera, it converted the fence surrounding the site and edges of Thursday night hedonism into a world of crevices to explore. Of course, gallivanter meet such fringe

activity with mixed reactions (depending on states of inebriation), but then screening images of alternative uses of public space, or even broaching the topic, can be a little disturbing.

Also out that night cladding its curator Hannah Jickling, **The Coat of Charms** was received by downtown Halifax youth with surprising curiosity. A trench coat gallery that featured the work of Portland-based collective F\* Mtn, a number of strikingly incendiary-esque kaleidoscopes, its exhibitionist gesture of flashing strangers was softened by the consenting intimacy of gazing through a delicate peep hole. Similarly challenging the viewer and artist alike in exhibiting and experiencing work in marginal and unexpected places is Gordon B. Isnor's **Alopecia Gallery**, a gallery located on his face, where he curated an audio piece by the duo Duke and Battersby whose faintness required the viewer to put their ear very much in Isnor's personal space.

Intimacy is the portable gallery's secret weapon.

Hans Ulrich Obrist's **Nanomuseum**, a truly handy exhibition space in the form of a folding picture frame, hosted another gallery, Vitamin Creative Space's the shop, presented by the artist Matt Hope. This convoluted arrangement served the simple function of providing a portable reading room for one or two people.

Standing somewhat more sedentary in Eyelevel (but arriving by post), **Nasubi Gallery**, Japanese artist Ozawa Tsuyoshi's institution in a milk-box, exhibited the work of Ken Lum, who presented a single nose-wiped child's mitten he had found in his Vancouver studio ages

ago and kept until present. Moving from his long-time home also meant the displacement of the mitten, a piece of biographical marginalia best suited to a small space.

Mathieu Arsenault's existentialist bicycle messenger service **Fixed Cog Hero** literally occupied the Eyelevel Members Gallery, which acted as the office for his constructed monastic persona. Peppered with philosophies of loneliness, Fixed Cog Hero spiritualized the act of delivering messages, stories, gestures, letters, and small objects throughout Halifax.

Despite its more systematized and diligently charted and documented operation, Kate Rich's **Feral Trade**, an international courier service operated through luggage and "harnessing the surplus freight potential of existing travel (friends, colleagues, passing acquaintances) for the practical circulation of goods," is very much about the singularity of our interaction with commodities.<sup>9</sup> At its Gottingen Street destination, the Feral Trade Café was set up to serve these smuggled snacks.

UK-based artist Gustav Metzger's ongoing **RAF** campaign provided a kind of punctuation mark to all of the works about portability, making the simple demand to *Reduce Art Flights*. Posted on the sides of buildings and telephone poles, in storefront windows, and on notice boards, as a political or motivational campaign it was intentionally left open-ended for interpretation.<sup>8</sup>



Altogether, then, what we saw in a convention of portable galleries was almost an anti-spectacle, with as

much centrifugal impetus as centripetal force. True, institutions and their actors can align, exchange and nest in one another, and their critique or rejection of conventional power structures is certainly oriented toward production: forming micro-communities, narratives, and support networks. But the fundamental challenge of portable galleries to standardization and power rests in the contradictions they embrace, living between the world of individuals and publicness, short-circuiting the mechanism separating open and closed, through practices tied tightly to daily life. From the perspective of a gathering in the margins, the concept of “spinoffs” sounds much more ludicrous than an art exhibition in a beard.



## Michael Eddy and Michael McCormack

<sup>1</sup> Between these two events a total of more than \$136 million CAD was paid out by US taxpayers. These figures, along with expectations of what attendees will spend on “hotels, meals, transportation, gifts and other purchases” were calculated into the expected profits that event organizers touted will end up in the hands of the locality; in the case of Tampa the “windfall” was projected at anything from \$150–\$200 million CAD: <http://www.tampabay.com/news/politics/research-firm-projects-rncs-local-economic-impact-of-1536-million/1246353>; no room here to go into doubts about the verity of these figures (converted here into Canadian currency).

<sup>2</sup> A short mention should be made that “portable” in the World Portable Gallery Convention 2012 project refers in a few cases to small and unofficial spaces as well as those, the majority, that are technically mobile.

3 For a formative attempt to cluster together a typology, see “There’s a New Beard In Town,” an online archive of portable exhibition spaces created by artist Hannah Jickling for the Or Gallery in 2005, which attests that in the past decade and a half, portable exhibition spaces in Canada and beyond have gone from being a novel fad to a widespread phenomenon. Accessible at: <http://www.orgallery.org/webprojects/hannah/>

4 See Luc Boltanski for a description of spokespersons and their troubled place as the means for institutions to act—but an inherently unstable one because of their existence as “flesh-and-blood beings like all the rest of us (...) and hence condemned, like all of us, to the ineluctability of the point of view (...)” *On Critique* (Polity Press, 2011), p. 84.

5 The significance of Bronson’s “Humiliation of the Bureaucrat” in *Museums by Artists* (Art Metropole, 1983) as a precedent into the line of inquiry around artist-run culture is rendered bold in the ambitious project that occurred in Vancouver in early October 2012, called “Institutions by Artists,” organized by PAARC, Phillip, and ARCA. See Vincent Bonin’s article on p. 65.

6 Judy Freya Sibayan, “Thoughts on the Work of the Ex-centric,” in *Ctrl+P Journal Issue #17* (available: [http://www.ctrlp-artjournal.org/pdfs/CtrlP\\_Issue17.pdf](http://www.ctrlp-artjournal.org/pdfs/CtrlP_Issue17.pdf)). Sibayan is here quoting Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism* (1989).

7 The panel, held September 6th 2012, was called “Expose Your Self: Gallery as Performer” and featured presentations by Hannah Jickling, Gordon B. Isnor, and Valerie LeBlanc with Daniel Dugas.

8 One Atlantic Canadian artist read it more as an equity campaign for those on small budgets (i.e. reduce the cost of flights for artists) rather than an ecological message, which is somewhat telling about the region.

9 Quote from Feral Trade website: [feraltrade.org](http://feraltrade.org)







Exhibition by Fukuda Miran

## Nasubi Gallery

Before it's all forgotten!

by Nakazawa Hideki (Artist)

Not many people know that the creation of the Nasubi Gallery was heavily influenced by Nakamura Masato's temper. Indeed, it would be no exaggeration to say it was Nakamura's inevitable temper that was

responsible for the gallery itself. As I (Nakazawa Hideki) was on the scene at the time, owner Ozawa Tsuyoshi encouraged me to write this memorandum chronicling the events leading up to the birth of the Nasubi Gallery – before it is all forgotten.

1992, the year before the birth of the Nasubi Gallery, marked a dramatic change in Japanese contemporary art. In February that year, Nakamura Masa-to, seemingly overcome by an odd fervor, flew in from South Korea to unofficially participate in NICAFA, the Nippon Contemporary Art Festival. It was also in 1992 that Murakami Takashi, who by 1991 had already set off on his remarkable career with shows such as “I Am Against Being For It,” participated in the important “Nakamura and Murakami” exhibition held in Seoul, Tokyo and Tsuruhashi. This, in addition to his solo show “Wild Wild,” the “Anomaly” exhibition organized by Sawaragi Noi and his “Paper Tearing Performance,” brought about a revolution in awareness that, it could be argued, shifted the foundations of this country’s contemporary art. Meanwhile, other movements and events, such as Ozawa’s Jizoing, the publication of the magazine Art Summit Members, the formation of the revival art group Small Village Center, the appearance of the floppy disk-based magazine Japan Art Today and the debut of pop artist Aida Makoto were all manifestations of the extraordinary

fervor that characterized this fateful year (through to early 1993).

In my opinion, this fervor reached a climax with the “Ginburart” exhibition organized by Nakamura Masato in April 1993. I believe that this represents the first stage of what I would like to call the Japanese Dada movement of the 1990s and the Nasubi Gallery, which first emerged at the “Ginburart” exhibition, could be defined as the second stage of this movement. My cavalier, and no doubt controversial, appraisal of this process can be summarized as follows: a wild fit of Nakamura Masato’s anger provided the catalyst for the transition of this Japanese Dada movement from Stage 1 (typified by Murakami Takashi) to Stage 2 (typified by Ozawa Tsuyoshi). I shall describe this process through the activities of these artists during “Ginburart.”

The “Ginburart” exhibition itself can be read as an enormous work of art by Nakamura Masato, the aim of which was to critique the phenomenon of the high class Ginza art gallery, and by extension, the whole art gallery system. Nakamura selected eight artists, including himself, and allocated one area per artist from Ginza 1-chome through to Ginza 8-chome. In a way, the artists felt as though Nakamura had given them some kind of homework assignment, which, in this case, is good metaphor for the relationship between the curator and the artists.

The response of Ozawa Tsuyoshi – who had been allocated Ginza 1-chome – was the Nasubi Gallery. Giving it a name that parodied the long-established Nabisu Gallery located in Ginza 1-chome, Ozawa presented an anti-art portable gallery, with which he seemed to say, “as long as it’s got white walls, it’s a gallery.” Although it displays Ozawa’s style, the Nasubi Gallery could be seen as little more than a clever student’s response to his teacher’s homework assignment. Other than the blue milk box version, which now typifies the whole project, there was also a polystyrene version and kettle version. Although Ozawa consciously made much of the gallery’s most important function – to exhibit the work or works inside it – this was not his major concern. Had Nasubi continued as it was, it might not have beyond such events of the 1960s as the gallery blocked by Hi Red Center or the portable gallery of the Fluxus group.

I also felt that Ozawa’s interest lay more in the opening event on the first day of “Ginburart.” He performed with Matushashi Mutsuo as part of Tengu Project, while at the same time being involved in promoting the Small Village Center’s Umbrella Project (by Ozawa, Murakami and Nakazawa / Nakamura), which began the day before the exhibition opened. I doubt very much that Ozawa ever imagined that the Nasubi Gallery, for him then little more than homework assignment, would even-

tually become, like Jizoing, one of his trade mark works.

Meanwhile, according to the flyer handed out at the time, Murakami Takashi, who was allocated Ginza 3-chome, was to carry out a performance title D.P.E. (door-to-door sales). This was to be a kind of self-destructive venture in which the artist, carrying a portfolio of work, would visit Ginza galleries and attempt to get them to accept his work. At the opening event, however, Murakami suddenly replaced this with another work title A day of nothing in particular. In the end, D.P.E. was never performed, and this is what angered Nakamura Masato.

As far as Nakamura was concerned, the loosely defined opening event wasn't particularly important. It was the whole "Ginburart" exhibition itself – as a critique of the gallery system – that was paramount. If D.P.E. had gone ahead as planned, it would have been the work to most closely embody the "Ginburart" theme. Nakamura angrily confronted Murakami about this, accusing him of not following his instructions and asked him what he was going to do to make up for it.

The compensation offered by Murakami was that he would approach the Nasubi Gallery and try to persuade it to hold an exhibition of his works. It was a response indicative of his superb wit and would no doubt have surprised both Nakamura and Ozawa. Murakami's





response became the catalyst by which the Nasubi Gallery's full potential was unleashed. Although it was originally intended as nothing more than one of the works in the "Ginburart" exhibition, it enabled the Nasubi Gallery to become recognized as not simply an "anti-art" statement but as a genuinely functioning anti-art gallery. Through this process, Nasubi Gallery was reduced to a single, accessible format: the milk box. It was even listed under the art galleries section of Pia magazine, and a series of solo exhibitions followed. Nakamura Masato's fury thus was the catalyst for this and created the context that paved the way for this shift in the history of Japanese art.

What happened to Nasubi Gallery after this is no doubt described in more detail elsewhere. I will just note, however, that Nakamura's characteristic angry responses again proved influential later on, particularly in the declaration of Nasubi Gallery as a non-profit gallery, and in the establishment of a sister gallery with the aim of selling art called Ai Ai Gallery. And the story continued with how the Nasubi Gallery went on to achieve fame and became the symbol of the second stage of the Japanese Dada movement of the 1990s.

(This piece was written in October 1996)

[Translated from Ozawa Tsuyoshi and Toyoda Fumi (ed.), *Nasubi Gallery: the smallest gallery in the world 1993-1995*, p. 2]

Images: Ken Lum's exhibition in the Nasubi Gallery

I FOUND THIS CHILD'S GLOVE  
WHEN I FIRST GOT MY STUDIO.  
I DON'T KNOW WHY, BUT I DECIDED  
TO KEEP IT.  
AS I AM ABOUT TO GIVE UP THE  
STUDIO FOR ANOTHER ONE, I'D  
LIKE FOR YOU TO TAKE CARE OF  
THIS GLOVE AND TO THINK OF THE  
CHILD.

*Ken Lum*  
July, 2012







## **Velcro Gallery**

**VELCRO GALLERY**

“Always open when on”

<http://velcrogallery.blogspot.ca/>

Call for submissions

Gallery details: 3” diameter velcro patch on an overcoat.

The patch is fuzzy so put the toothy velcro on your piece!

Contact curator Beck Gilmer-Osborne for more details.

[ rrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr@hotmail.com ]

The gallery will be open from September 12<sup>th</sup>–29<sup>th</sup>

Submission deadline: August 15<sup>th</sup>, 2012



**VELCRO GALLERY**



ASK ME ABOUT  
CONTEMPORARY  
ART

Exhibitors:  
Jessica Wiebe  
Kyle Martens  
Stephanie Yee  
Andrew Maize  
Becky Welter Nolan  
Suzy Cooper  
Justin Lees (inset)



## Gallery

Gallery Deluxe Gallery formed out of a collaborative idea to use a private but shared space to show art in a context that didn't fit the parameters of a traditional gallery. We opened the gallery in the attic crawlspace above the service stairway in our 2nd story flat in 2005. The gallery maintained a monthly roster of openings featuring local, national and international artists for 2 years. Given that the actual space was only large enough for 5 people to view the art comfortably, openings took the form of kitchen parties, with visitors gathering there and often



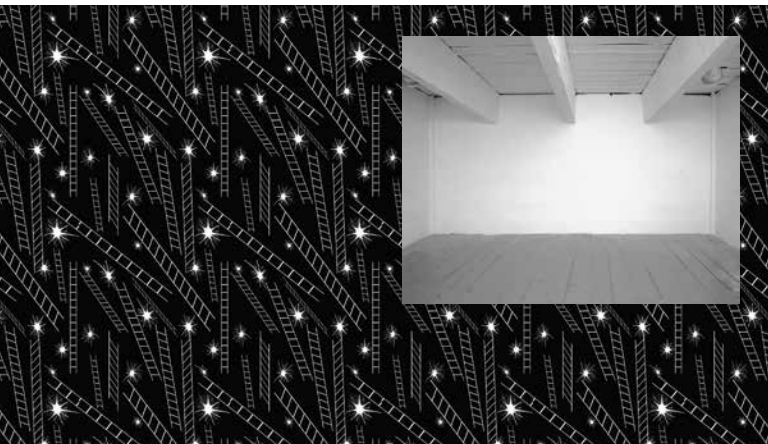
**Deluxe**

**Gallery**

spilling into the living room. The gallery helped us build a relationship to art that extended beyond our own practices and allowed us to become engaged with the local, and global art communities in a way that was both familiar and new. Gallery Deluxe Gallery was open from June 2005 - July 2007 at 6015 Willow Street in Halifax, N.S.

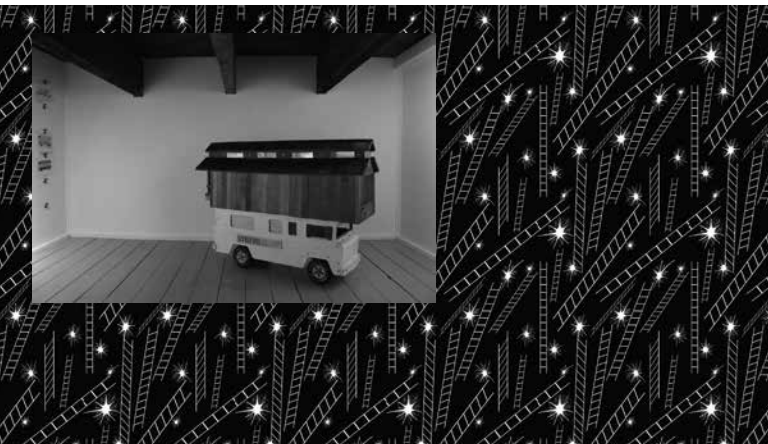
In early 2012 we were invited by Eyelevel Gallery to participate in the World Portable Gallery Convention, an exhibit showcasing portable and otherwise alternative

gallery spaces. We rebuilt Gallery Deluxe Gallery as a life-sized replica on stilts inside of Eyelevel, taking great care to recreate the space as true to the original as possible, even using fixtures original to GDG like the lighting, the trap door and the signage. For this new incarnation of our little gallery, Halifax-based artist Chris Foster, who played a major roll in the construction of the space, tailored a novel installation, creating a humorously recursive experience for viewers. “Convoy”, featured illustrated postcards, which visitors were encouraged to colour. The focal piece was a toy Winnebago, meticulously modified with a second story and gabled rooftop, revealing a vast exhibition space, complete with white walls and hardwood floors. This work called to mind Eyelevel Gallery’s own



nomadic history during its 38 years in Halifax. In Foster's words, "This tongue-and-cheek sculpture whimsically suggests that Eyelevel Gallery break the shackles of rent and embrace its future as a fully nomadic gallery on wheels."

Having just climbed the stairs of a replica gallery from the past, situated within an established gallery from the present, viewers were then confronted with yet another miniature gallery; this one an alternate-future, mobile-version of the one housing all of these alternative spaces during the WPGC. The reincarnation of Gallery Deluxe Gallery came full circle, joining the past, present and future of alternative spaces in Halifax in a way we had never anticipated.





Chris Foster Convoiy, 2012



Above: Joar Nango and Tanya Busse *Four Funnels* (three working, one for show), 2007; below: Team Willow Group Show, 2005





Above: Chris Foster Conroy, below: opening at Gallery Deluxe Gallery



## RAF

This interview is a composite from three interviews with Gustav Metzger conducted by Emma Ridgway, the first recorded February 13<sup>th</sup> 2008, the second April 2009, and the third on August 30<sup>th</sup> 2012, all in London.

**Gustav Metzger:** This RAF project is an attempt to link different aspects of the art world to the real world. Of course RAF is a summing up of the idea of reducing art flights. But of course RAF stands for Royal Air Force, mainly, and then we think back on the last war, World War II, the RAF played such a decisive part in

the war and the victory over our enemies. And so linking this up with the past, war and the danger of war, it also brings us to something more up to date, which is RAF in German, Rote Armee Faktion (Red Army Faction), a kind of guerrilla movement particularly in the 70s, where the so-called revolutionaries tried to seriously damage the German political and economic life. This was interesting for me.

Emma Ridgway: Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, has a history of significance for cross-Atlantic traffic—especially for the military and WWII, as the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) often cooperates with British RAF—so the acronym is locally recognizable in that regard. But the Red Army Faction reference is a little more distant. Are these references significant for you because of their positioning of action as in concert with groups (military), or more anarchistically (Baader Meinhof), toward making change?



GM: This is extremely difficult to answer. I would rather like to leave it in the air anyhow. They are two powerful organizations, and there they are. And merely to mention them is in itself significant; if they come

together or they clash, these are vast stretches of history and world wars we are dealing with. I would leave it hanging in the air.

The RAF stands for a multiplicity of historical realities and present day issues such as the danger through pollution and in this case the pollution from airplanes, and of course there is also noise pollution from airplanes. It was specifically brought together in connection with the Basel Art Fair of 2006, when I rang a few friends in Basel and asked them if I could distribute this idea, Reduce Art Flights (RAF), and the answer was that it was just too short notice. So this never happened in Basel, this kind of protest, an attempt to influence the art world to travel less or not to travel at all or not to ship art works through the skies. And then came the invitation to exhibit the Muenster Sculpture Project, which I accepted, and then I travelled there. And before traveling I was given the catalogue to the previous Sculpture Project. In that catalogue there was a short sentence that had a big impact on me that said that the bombing of Muenster—it was heavily bombed in the last war—was in a way a retaliation for the German wholesale bombing of Coventry in 1940. That sparked off the idea that I could somehow commemorate these two bombings as my contribution. Eventually that's what happened when I visited Muenster for my investigation. While this happened, talking to the director of the Muenster Kunstverein who was also active as a curator for the Muenster Sculpture Project, the idea came up



again of RAF—since it was the RAF that actually bombed Muenster, the RAF and American planes—to, as it were, revitalize Reduce Art Flights. This is what happened, the idea was accepted and by the time the show opened some months later some very nicely printed leaflets were available to the visitors. The leaflets said “RAF: Reduce Art Flights,” and then in German “Muenster: die zweite Bombardierung,” which means “the second bombardment of Muenster.” And there again there was the double meaning, the bombardment of the present day airplanes going across and putting pollution onto the town, and then again the second bombardment of Muenster by my exhibition, dealing with the past and these leaflets. 5000 were printed and distributed to all the visitors to the exhibition. And that in a nutshell brings the project together, but it’s not ended, it goes on, it could go on for years, because I don’t imagine the art world will give up using airplanes for transportation. But it is a kind of nudge in the ribs, as it were, to remind people there is a problem, and let’s talk about this problem of endless flights here and there. What particularly annoyed me originally was the statement by the organizers of the Basel art fair that when it comes time to take the art fair to Miami, everyone could get a 50% discount on the airplane flights. I thought this was really over the top, sort of pumping up the possibility of airplane use. For me this has very much to do with rejection of mass transport through air, and of course through cars and buses; and of course a criticism of the art world, where everything is out for maximizing everything in every direction.



ER :  
And could you talk a little bit about your objections to commercialization and commercial activities in the art world?



GM: Yes, but this is definitely linked to this issue. My rejection of the art gallery system goes back to the early 60s. And it hasn't actually weakened. When I now see these very big and powerful art magazines like Artforum consisting mainly of advertisements for private galleries I do get upset, at the same time one can't resist the seduction. There is so much effort that goes into making each page. And of course the vast amount of money in making these products, and fees have to be paid. Nonetheless I was in the library today and there is a certain appeal, in the colour and invention—but in principle I think it is going the wrong way. It's a massive escalation that we have seen every decade, there is more and more advertising and more and more galleries, and in a sense more power to the galleries. And I am very upset by all that.

ER: One thing that comes up from thinking about not taking flights in the art world, which is so international in its activities in how its activities operate now,



is that of speed versus slowness. I was wondering if you could talk about that.

GM: Speed is increasingly dominating life, and of course the mobile telephone is the chief example of how everything is being speeded up. People now have and seem to want instant speed to the person, or to China or to the room next door, often people use the mobile telephone these days or e-mail to their wife or to meet behind the next wall. I think all that is really terrible, this principle of instantaneity. Life hasn't been like that and it contradicts the kind of organic interchange that people really could have or should have. Again it has to do with commerce: you have a chance to make a deal, let's make a deal NOW. It's all very sad.

ER: Do you have particular intentions or ideas of what people might do in receiving the message of the RAF campaign?

GM: Quite frankly I am not optimistic about actually affecting people's behaviour, but I think these little printed pieces of paper can and will have a certain impact on the way people think, and of course people will relate it to the vast attention given to so-called climate change and environmental dangers. I think you've noticed that more and more artists are engaging with these issues. There's no question that in this country, Great Britain, certainly, there is an almost daily increase in awareness in the art community of problems that are dealt with on a world









scale by governments or think tanks or scientists. I think that's for the good. That wider movement towards a kind of involvement with political, economic and world issues, this little contribution can play its part and I expect it will. And the more these pamphlets that we had in Muenster and in Turin, the more places this idea turns up, the better. And I think it will go on, being distributed and considered by the art world.

ER: There are other “appeals” in your work to the artistic community. One was *Years Without Art*, suggesting that people should give up making art for a period.

GM: For three years, 1977–1980, that was the term I proposed. And that was put forward in the ICA catalogue, “Art Into Society—Society Into Art: Seven German Artists,” in an exhibition that took place in 1974.

ER: Your *Auto-Destructive Art Manifesto* (1959) proposed a new way of making art. Art that would de-materialize through its making, so the art object would be destroyed as it was being created; the intention was that nothing would remain that could contribute to the art market economy. Is that account about right?

GM: Yes, that's a good summary, yes.

ER: A while ago we watched a re-creation of the light projections of the *Acid Action Paintings* (1963 on-

wards). It was at the Self-Cancellation event held at Beaconsfield Gallery, London (2008), which was in response to your Auto-Destructive Art Manifestos. The projection showed acid being painted on nylon slides and included amplified sounds of the disintegration process. You commented on the beauty of it, comparing it to a Rothko painting, so it wasn't just the concept of the work you found compelling.

GM: Yes, it was astonishing because colour came through. When I originally projected acid on nylon, beginning in February 1963, all the images on the screen were black and white—and here, for some reason or other that I could never understand—they had colour on the screen and it was indeed breath-taking and startling and a completely fresh experience for me and for the audience.

ER: Yes it was very striking. And would you talk specifically about your appeals to artists to be more open about the personal position, as regards ethics and politics?

GM: In the broadest sense it is a question of artists being part of a much wider community—a world community—and facing up to the world-wide conditions that may make future life impossible. To oppose those world developments that are extremely destructive. Taking moral standpoints and from there moving into political activities, however modest, to affect the world.

ER: You were an activist before you were an artist. Was there a particular moment that you decided that contemporary politics was going to be a core part of your work?

GM: Yes, my interest in politics was there from the age of around 17. That was in wartime, around 1942–43, when I was living in Leeds and there I almost completely converted to the idea of becoming some sort of revolutionary figure—art at that point had no place in my conception of the future. It was only in the late summer of 1944, when I felt I would move away from the ideal of becoming a political activist to becoming an artist. So moving into art was a way of moving forward without giving up the political interest; because I thought one could fuse the political ideal of social change with art. For example, the writing of Eric Gill who was both an artist and a craftsman and politically involved, was a kind of inspiration to me. I could see this possibility of using the ideas of social change within art, with art and not simply through political, economic activity.

ER: Sometimes we visit exhibitions together and discuss the work. On a number of occasions you have been disinterested in the work because it lacked any political bite or ethical aspect. Is this something you feel artists' work must contain?

GM: Yes, I think that is inescapable and the more the world changes, is changing, in the direction of more speed and more activities. And the more that hap-

pens the more necessary it is for people to stand back and, not merely in the art sphere but in every sphere of intellectual activity, to stand back and distance oneself and come up with alternative ways of dealing with reality rather than going along with a direction that is essentially catastrophic and consuming itself and turning itself into a numbers game. Where the technology, especially the technology of the mobile phones and this endless sound machinery that people force into their biological mechanism, seems to be unstoppable; and the more it goes on, the more we need to stand aside and distance ourselves from this rush towards destruction.

ER: I know you've spoken many times about the rush to destruction; the destructive drive that's part of people. But there's also, in the '40s, Erich Fromm's writing, such as his "Humanist Credo" and his writing on the love of life. I'm thinking of his concept of "Biophilia," the love of living things, of ecology (be it people or plants, for example), which creates and generates in people a great positive surge in life and love in a very profound way. Do you think that the positive living drive is as big as the destructive drive?

GM: I would imagine that if it is in terms of numbers I would think it would be bigger than that destructive drive. Otherwise we would have gone by now. And so I think the drive towards life is overwhelming, yes, I would say that.

ER: An area that repeatedly comes up in contemporary culture and in the field of art is a particular form of cynicism toward politics and ethics; an inverted attitude towards social change and the idea that you could have any impact. Would you talk about your position on this trend of cynicism and disinterest regarding politics?

GM: Well it is a great problem. And that people adapt to the general direction, that is driven by politics, by the current political parties, and by the system in which we live—which is all about producing and consuming and making and keeping on making. The term growth is at the centre of it all and growth is all to do with numbers rather than values. Growth leads towards self-destruction and towards machinery breaking down, and towards machinery made to break down so that you can replace it so that you can go on borrowing money, spending it, and accumulating. That is what we know as the capitalist system. This system is inherently cynical, it is inherently throw-away—and damaging in all conceivable directions—in the production of food and transport systems. And artists go along with it, reflect it and that means they then support it—and this is what I have been criticizing now and all my life: that people should bow down to the main direction of society, which is crippling. Only recently we have seen how capitalism can be extremely self destructive, barely surviving—but I would like to add to this current discussion: I believe capitalism will come out of this crisis and will actually be stronger than before because they will

have learnt lessons, and they will apply these lessons in order to maintain the system and maintain their power. So the idea that because of this so called credit crunch, and because the weakness of capitalism has been so damagingly exposed, that's not going to stop the system. It will learn new tricks and I would suggest that in 10 years time capitalism will flourish as never before.

ER: But do you hope that within that there will have been lessons learnt?

GM: Yes, lessons learnt on how to protect the system, how to make it work even better, that is what they are going to do. They are intelligent enough and determined enough and they have so much at stake, to make it survive.

ER: But in terms of state systems of governance, for example within the UK, public services like the NHS, clean water, education—infrastructures that are set out to provide a better quality of life for the largest number of people, these are within the capitalist system. Erm, what point am I making? Oh yeah—any governance system should set out to do that, to my mind. So are you fundamentally against the idea of centralized government?

GM: No I'm not, I think one has to have centralized government, and the police to protect people, so it's a question of a government that is wiser and that is prepared to stand up for people rather than for financial systems.



ER: And we were talking before about Raymond Williams, and this beautiful quote “To be truly radical is to make hope possible, rather than despair convincing.”

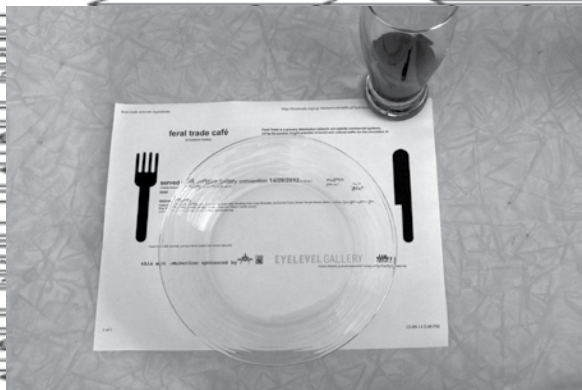
GM: Yes, I think that art, if it is practiced genuinely, is certainly away from the destruction that is in us and away from the destructivity in society. And so I remain certain that the drive towards art, the possibility of making art is of the utmost importance, and is inherently sound. The criticism that one has of a certain type of art



of today is that there is not enough inner energy towards life in that art. That is one of my concerns that the art and the artists don't give themselves sufficient opportunity to drift into the depths of humanity, the depths of nature, and from those depths come out like a swimmer, coming out from the depths

and breathing deeply. Art, I believe, needs to sink into the centre of a human being, come up, and that will be hope—the art will be hope. The art will have the energy and the wisdom out of the deep entering into oneself and into nature.





## Feral Trade

Feral Trade is a sole-trader grocery business, trading over social networks since 2003. The first Feral Trade was 50 kg of coffee direct from farmers in San Pedro Nonualco El Salvador to Bristol UK. Products move from A to B in the spare baggage space of travelling artists, curators, friends and acquaintances: an underground freight network at least as reliable as DHL.

All shipments are tracked on the Feral Trade Courier website, a slow accretion of shipping data that logs the load-bearing capacity of cultural relationships on the side.



# feral trade coffee Alvarado

from **San Pedro Nonualco** San Pedro Nonualco, El Salvador

Coffee farmed by Mario Ernesto Alvarado in San Pedro Nonualco. Sun dried, cleaned and milled by hand these beans encapsulate the real character of pulped natural coffee. feraly traded since: 26/09/12.

## courier data for FER-1666

**Ducrow Court** Bristol, UK to **Eyelevel Gallery** Halifax, Canada

*dispatched 29/08/12 delivered 31/08/12*



**summary:** coffee Alvarado shipment FER-1666  
coffee supply for World Portable Gallery  
Convention in Halifax, Canada, sept 2012,  
**REMARKS:** shipping with last minute courier passing  
through london enroute home to halifax  
august 30th

**QTY:** 1 units at 500g bag each  
**FROM:** **Ducrow Court** in Bristol, UK  
<http://feraltrade.org>  
**TO:** **Eyelevel Gallery** in Halifax, Canada  
<http://www.eyelevelgallery.ca>  
**SENDER:** kate rich  
**RECEIVER:** michael eddy  
**REQUESTED:** to ship between 06/05/12 and 01/09/12  
**STATUS:** delivered Eyelevel Gallery 31/08/12  
**MAP** route map  
[www.feraltrade.org](http://www.feraltrade.org)

**COURIER:** ☺Eleanor King ☻feral trade ☻michael eddy

**TOTAL ROUTE:** **San Pedro Nonualco**-San Salvador-Panama City-Barbados-London Gatwick airport-DHL Gatwick-Ducrow Court-DHL Bristol-Coffee Compass roasters- **Ducrow Court**-Bristol Temple Meads station-London Paddington station-Monmouth Coffee Covent Garden-London Heathrow Airport-Halifax airport-Eleanor King residence-Eyelevel Gallery-**Eyelevel Gallery**



coffee Alvarado **Ducrow Court** to **Eyelevel Gallery** 1. feral items on firstgreatwestern train to london 2. eleanor king outside monmouth coffee covent garden 3. eleanor king coffee and cola dropoff at eyelevel 4. coffee received eyelevel gallery

## Courier Reports for FER-1666

**Mario Ernesto Alvarado** Thu, 3 May 2012 20:52:35 +0000 Subject: RE: coffe (fwd): Kate: the cargo is just giving me the price, they said it is \$ 485.00 for the courier and the coffee is \$230.00 it is \$ 715.00, the coffee is ready, you have to tell if I ship it, I think I could be shipping it nex monday or tuesday, in the other hand I am still trying to talk with the Siglo XXI, to see if I can send you the rest of the coffee trough them. Mario Ernesto.

**kate rich** 7 May 2012. As it was yet again raining, following the wettest UK april on record despite the threat of drought, I western unioned the money by phone, using as required from my home phone, mobiles not meeting WU security criteria. On the first attempt transaction was refused by the bank which machine-phoned simultaneously my mobile to warn of western union's suspicious transaction. So I had to hang up WU & use that phone to call the bank's fraud department using my phone's keypad: to confirm your identity press buttons to confirm part of your date of birth from 3 choices. Re-phoned WU had to start the whole transaction from scratch, Operator 737 asked do you know this person personally, making crystal clear WU's clear legal distance from any element of the transaction aside from the money part. Cash went through cleanly this time, should reach el salvador in 10 minutes.

**DHL** Tue, 15 May 2012 15:29:10 +0200 Subject: RE: redelivery: Hi Kate shipment should be coming to you tomorrow 160512. Right now shipment is held in Bristol ,we have to change delivery service centre which will be covered by Dhl London Gatwick. Delivery address will be changed and sent to new address for delivery tomorrow 160512. Hopefully there wont be any delays. If you will track the shipment you should see a courier scan tomorrow morning Rgrds Brs Dagmar

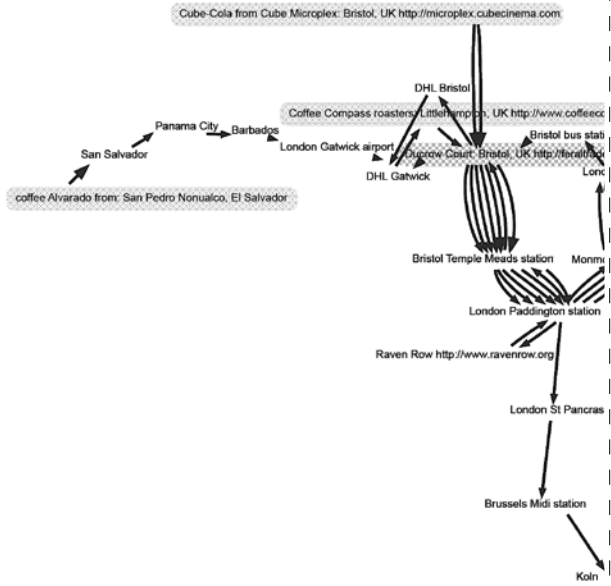
*onward transit of FER-1669 from Coffee Compass roasters arrived Ducrow Court 2012-05-18;*

**ali jones** Fri, 18 May 2012 08:33:06 +0100 (BST) coffee here. one box. 24 toll roasts of coffee beans 80 metalised valved bags coffee Alvarado from San Pedro Nonualco arrived Coffee Compass roasters 2012-05-16

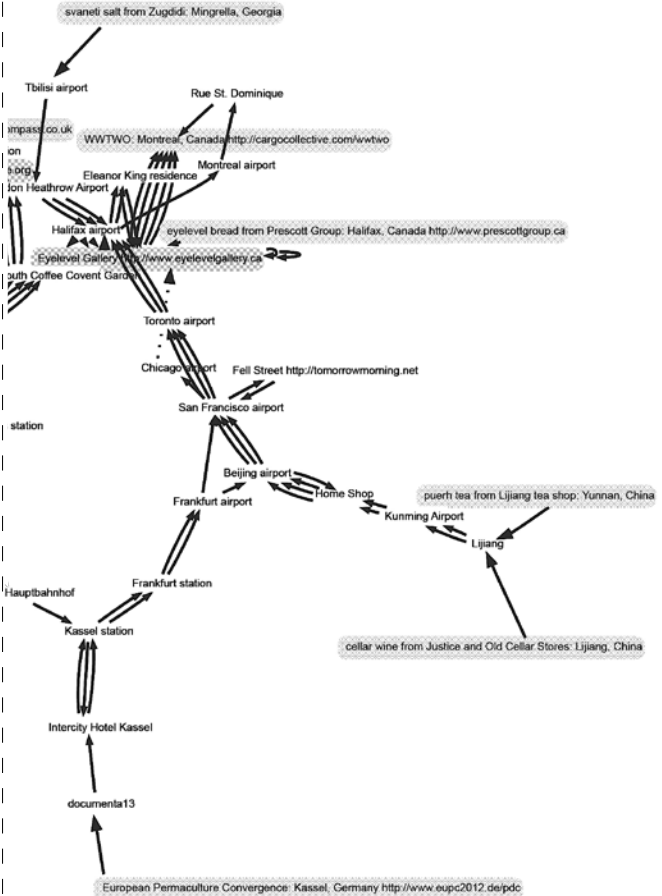
**feral trade** Day return trip bristol-london to co-ordinate with passing courier Eleanor King, departing for Halifax on the 30<sup>th</sup>. An 11<sup>th</sup> hour save for groceries travelling to World Portable Gallery Convention 2012. Departing bristol amidst a band of heavy rain I arrived in London in good time, however the plan was nearly crashed by paralympic torch passing which seized up the West End at that moment, effectively paralysing buses the only London transport form actually accessible to the disabled. Following advice from clueless olympic volunteers, when the 3rd cross town bus unexpectedly terminated & without Eleanor's phone number to update timing I finished up 'racing' paralympically speaking from Green Park tube station a good 30 minute semi sprint. Due to police-backed road barricade at Piccadilly Circus this included cutting through the Trocadero sub-street shopping mall following shouted instructions of a passerby heard through helicopter fuzz it was just like the bourne ultimatum. Limped in to Covent Garden 25 mins after our meeting time to spot Eleanor still waiting outside Monmouth Coffee easily visible with tate carrier bag. Handover effected followed by a torrential downpour arriving from the southwest, I had a coffee at Monmouth & headed back to Bristol.

**Eleanor King** From the Monmouth coffee shop, the shipment travelled by foot to Southbank and then by tube and a walk through the Kensington Gardens to Serpentine Gallery. There was an underground pedestrian traffic jam (escalator out) at the South Kensington tube station, causing an unexpected delay getting to a party at a place called the Cheshire Cheese on Milford lane, by Temple station. After a few pints, the package was transported by London underground to Gunnersbury where it rested overnight. To London Heathrow at 10:30 am August 30<sup>th</sup>, no problems at security exiting London, nor customs entering Halifax. The shipment was held at 5675 Hennessey street for 2 days before being delivered to Eyelevel Gallery.

**michael eddy** Fri, 31 Aug 2012 Package arrived safely to Eyelevel Gallery as install was going on, following two unsuccessful attempts to pick up at courier Eleanor King's house (1st time, wrong address; 2nd time, nobody home). Beans still awaiting grinding.



FERAL TRADE NETWORK Eyelevel Gallery



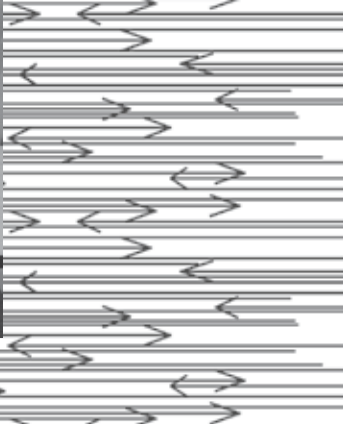


Voyage of the microculture sandwich



TOTAL ROUTE: European Permaculture Convergence-documenta13-Intercity Hotel Kassel-Kassel station-Frankfurt station-Frankfurt airport-Beijing airport-Home-Shop-San Francisco airport-Toronto airport-Halifax airport-Eyeflex Gallery









## Coat of Charms

*The Coat of Charms exposes itself to Nova Scotia at the World Portable Gallery Convention 2012*

In 1978, Portland's yet-to-be mayor flashed a nude woman made of bronze. The woman was a sculpture, the gesture became a photo and eventually a poster along with the words "expose yourself to art." The poster has been reproduced, distributed and ripped off around the world just as imagery of the trench coat has proliferated through its use by detectives, goths and vampires. There

is also the shady character who sells illicit jewels from within their coat and the pervert who flashes their family jewels to passers-by.

What was revealed from inside Bud Clark's trench coat? Who was exposing whom to what, and how might exhibitionism lend new possibilities to the development of an exhibition? As a mobile gallery located inside a trench coat, the Coat of Charms is moved by the impulse to be seen-by and exposed-to consenting and non-consenting publics.

The portability of this artist-run garment allows for the creation of new audience vocabularies outside of formalized exhibition structures. These approaches to visibility and self-image-making are borrowed from the work of anarchists, feminists, queers and perverts.



Coat of Charms, Halifax, 1999

For their exhibition, Observer of Beautiful Forms, Portland-based collective F\* Mtn reflects, refracts and perverts art-works from their Portland-based community through kaleidoscope trinkets dangling inside the Coat of Charms. Originating from a thrift store in Dartmouth, The Coat of Charms returns to Nova Scotia as a flashback. With striking resemblance to Bud Clark's original pose, and arriving via Portland, it points to the now-famous postcard of a man flashing the Peggy's Cove lighthouse. Through the presentation of F\* Mtn's Observer



of Beautiful Forms, the Coat of Charms imagines furtive re-exposure to Nova Scotia by way of the World Portable Gallery Convention 2012. Along this process, they were curated into a gallery, which is actually a trenchcoat, which is actually a legitimately funded gallery, which they were curated in, which they also curated in, which they also curated the curator in. They put the work of artists in tubes which sort of resemble sticks of dynamite or portable peepholes, but are actually kaleidoscopes that contain original artworks, which are only copies of real art, which function as real art.

*The Coat of Charms presents: Observer of Beautiful Forms*

To look into a kaleidoscope is to see beauty in the union of shapes, colors, and patterns. As one peeks into the peephole, it becomes a site for viewing an extreme consolidation of visual information. Pushed to a functional level, the experience of looking into a kaleidoscope can be a site for reflection— generating forms that can resemble pre-existing objects, and symmetrical abstractions like those found in rorschachs. In light of this, F\* Mtn. is pleased to present Observer of Beautiful Forms— a curatorial project exhibiting in The Coat of Charms as part of World Portable Gallery Convention 2012 in Halifax, Nova Scotia, this exhibition features hand-made kaleidoscopes containing images of work by selection of artists from F\* Mtn.'s peer network. Through reconfiguring ways of looking at images produced in their community, F\* Mtn. attempts at discovering new approaches to reflecting on the cultural patterns that inform its practice.











**HALIFAX**





## MediaPackBoard

Created in 2005, the MediaPackBoard (MPB) is both a performance-assisting apparatus and a series of performances based upon encounters, conversations, and video playback. It consists of a customized backpack-style rack on which a battery operated monitor screen plays back signal from live or prerecorded sources. The inception of the MPB came from our previous portable/





mobile experiences: the TRUNK© Gallery (1996–2001) in which we showed works in the trunk of our car and Location Location Location: We Are Getting Closer (2002), a roaming wireless webcam expedition created with Emmedia in Calgary and the Atlantic Cultural Space Conference in Moncton.

The MPB is a hybrid beast: media arts gallery, performance space and a conversation all at the same time. It is portable; you can wear it on your back and carry from one place to another. It is also mobile, capable of recording and playback on the move. The fine line be-





tween portability and mobility crosses over many times here. Mobility comes from the old French, *mobilité*, and alludes to ideas of movement and speed, change and inconsistency, as well as fickleness! It is ironic that fickleness, a form of unreliability, would be part of any technology. We like this, especially today, where the idea of mobility has become so closely understood as a technological phenomenon. One of the strangest things about it is that corporations have appropriated the idea of mobility for themselves. They have become our mobility. What is there for us other than Bell,



Telus or Rogers? Can we be mobile and not subscribe to any plan? As a society, we tend to think not. The origins of mobility relate to plain old necessity. Historically, in the realm of the nomad, the concept of movement, migration and keeping moving, was a way to find something better, to improve one's status. It was a basic strategy for human survival. When the tribe moved on to the spring or winter location, everyone came along, and communication within the group remained insular. In the case of MPB, mobility is provided by legwork as opposed to reliance on a communications provider. But, being a good hybrid animal, it is capable of using mobile computing as a tool of dialogue and interaction.

We are all aware that in today's world, the meaning of mobility has everything to do with staying connected while moving. And with modern technology, we are now able to search everywhere in the world to find individuals that we connect with, our searched and chosen tribe that we carry with us. Click and we are together, we experience, and we bond. What we don't expect or experience as often in contemporary society, are social encounters in the physical world, the one on one in the public realm – unless a marketing campaign is involved. We can seek it out; make a trip to the market to exchange goods, services and conversation on a physical level. But practically speaking, the day-to day social scene is more

often online, through a screen. In all of this, there remains an endless opportunity for artists to expand consumer use of these technologies, to make them their own, to carry out their vision. In doing so, they follow the precedent established as each new technology has shown its face in the marketplace. The concept of reinventing social interaction might require a willingness to step outside of the comfort zone. Slipping into the role of the entrepreneur is one way to retake control over the public space, to intervene.

Corporate branding of mobility has positioned itself to appear as the only motor capable of moving us forward. Like the tethers of condominium living, as consumers, we become locked into never-ending monthly fees. Are we mobile or are we harnessed to the strings of a service provider? While modern mobility is on some levels more about goods and less about people, it defines and dominates the world we live in. Future portable galleries might address these concerns.

For the present, what is the relevance of a project like the MediaPackBoard in a world of walkie-talkies, handheld transceivers, and mobile theatres? Does it have a place? Is it pertinent? These are questions that we continue to ask ourselves and with each project we find answers that point to its relevance. To exchange words during a live encounter on the streets presents an element of risk,



and ultimately, the chance to meet the other. It offers an opportunity to have a public conversation on a personal level without plans for broadcast and sponsorship driven content. For us, it is worth the effort. Let's keep moving.





## **I am listening to the chatter of faraway friends**

By Vincent Bonin

### **1.** “For Michael.”

Last year, I started to write in a quasi “literary” mode, partly inspired by your texts, each of them addressed to a friend.

While sorting out my ideas, motifs in your collaborative work with Jon and Robert also crept at every

corner. I first thought about the concept of the Holding Environment, which the psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott coined to describe the nurturing conditions provided by the mother during the development of the infant at an early stage. When the mother leaves, the child uses various objects as substitutes and props that compensate for the momentarily severed dyadic structure. However, without this artificial setting made from the parent's carefully calibrated presence and absence, the child would never develop properly. According to Winnicott and his followers, transference can be compared to the holding environment's set-up, as the situation of speaking to the analyst provides the imaginary space in which discourse can safely unfold.

In Knowles Eddy Knowles' work, Winnicott's scheme was periodically used as an apt (and, needless to say, tongue-in-cheek) metaphor to comment upon the dialectics between dependence and autonomy among a collective structure, and in the larger art world. For instance, when it first appeared in some of your projects, the environment referred to the school where you three met in your twenties and the dialogical, but remote, space that your projects created when each of you drifted toward different directions. You also often talked to me about your experience of living in China, far away from your friends of the day. I know the World Portable Gallery



Convention 2012 was an occasion to reunite with the Halifax art community, in which many of the projects showcased were launched while you studied at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design in the early 2000s. I also know that you and your collaborator, Michael McCormack, did not put these various initiatives under the umbrella of “institutions by artists” but envisioned them instead as small “asides” within the participants’ own individual artistic practices. Some of the projects are “frivolous” and others have overtly political agendas. In this view, the convention as a whole could be seen a miniaturized and ironical companion to another somewhat similar event that happened in Vancouver during the fall of 2012. Both manifested a need, voiced by so many people, to recover the spirit of the social imagination of the 1960s and 1970s or at least “escape” the administered life for a brief moment. However in Vancouver, during the lunch breaks, people alluded to what everyone wished should have been talked about (but that none of us had the courage to speak out loud). These discussions, which unfolded in the transitory spaces of the University complex where the conference was held, nourished hope that the gathering could enable some sort of collective release. As I understood from the comments fusing here and there, no one had a clear idea, beside a legal definition, of what was really an artist-run center in 2012. The moniker “institutions by artists” did not help either, as the possessive remained in a grey

zone—for the most cynical of us, it referred to the artists actually owning a building, becoming a landlord: the ultimate master subject of his own will. For others, it alluded to the residues of self-determination (and of sovereignty) of the 1960s and 1970s. No one, it seemed, wanted to get to the more pressing and looming issue of the dismantling of the welfare state in this country. Shocked by the blindness at our own privilege, some speakers from other parts of the world told us how deprived they were of resources that we took largely for granted. We learnt how they managed to find alternatives when means dwindled down. But, it seemed, or perhaps this is the way I understood it, that these “models” of working with less, when wrenched out of their various contexts, sounded way too much like the rhetoric of austerity measures that our conservative governments are shoving down our throats. The shorthand format of the conference also produced a loss of meaning. Some speakers acted as spokespersons and described the



mandate of their institutions (fictitious, artist-run). Few al-  
luded in the more general sense to the economical frame-  
works in which they had to survive on an everyday basis.  
This information shortage was due to the very brief time  
allotted (the standard 20 minutes), that obliged them to  
condense otherwise complex narratives into user-friendly  
pitches. Moreover, the terms everyone used, “institution,”

“self-determination” or  
“non-for-profit,” be-  
came the hegemonic  
structural devices to  
which everything else  
was compared and  
leveled. No one ques-  
tioned, for instance,  
how one notion could  
have completely dif-  
ferent meaning and  
performativity when  
it was translated in  
another language or  
even, to what extent it  
could not be useful at  
all in another cultural  
context. Miniaturizing  
the endeavor—within  
hand’s reach and pas-



tiche-like—was the right path to take. However, I want to question the immediacy (or the necessity) of “the portable” as operating metaphor, and conversely the need to revive some models of the past, when most of them seem already exhausted, at least for me. The holding environment as theoretical model is still very apt to think about the precarity of an institutional gift that is surrounded by ominous distance, menaced from the outside and also fragile within. But the portable gallery seems too much like something you forcibly own and protect, or introject.

2. “I recently visited e-flux’s new headquarters in New York City’s lower east side. I was accompanied by a friend who is undergoing research for a PhD on the genre of the press release. She wished to see Anselm Franke’s exhibition “Animism” and also have a peek at the headquarters of this now ubiquitous node in the art world’s “discourse industries.” Unfortunately, it was closed on Monday. We, however, saw the office space, with its long uncluttered tables along which a few employees, all women, worked using their *own* laptops. This detail—the possessive—is important, as it sets up the parameters of labor relationships and power imbalance between those who “produce” content and those who manage its visibility. These computer screens were, so to say, the reverse of ours, when each day press releases pop up and pile up in our inboxes. The working space could thus be described

more as an interface than an office. I figured that, naturally, all of the employees might hope to gain responsibility within the narrowness of their tasks, and eventually share entrepreneurial authorship with Anton Vidokle and Julieta Aranda, but accepted, for the time being, to be on the bottom rung of the ladder, in an interval that Gregory Sholette describes as “dark matter.”<sup>1</sup> One of the employees generously chaperoned us to the second floor so that we could see bits of the exhibition. She did not open the lights, nor the monitors or projectors and sat on a chair with her laptop. My friend, less shy than I, attempted to ask questions about the employee’s job, and the structure of e-flux, but we got very evasive answers. After a few minutes attempting to peer into the darkened vitrines, we decided to leave, as it became clear we had trespassed the permitted slot of time. Later on, during the *Institutions by Artists* conference in Vancouver, I shared the elevator of the Ramada hotel with Anton Vidokle. We presented ourselves politely but no conversation unfolded from this encounter.”

The French artist Robert Filliou made his “Galerie Légitime—couvre chef d’oeuvre” stamp in 1961. After operating the Fluxus shop “La cédille qui sourit” with his friend, the Fluxus artist George Brecht, he decided to use his hat as a container for various small works that he would carry around. Walking on the streets of Paris, he would present himself to whomever passed by, saying the following:



2 On Robert Filliou, especially his presence in Canada, see: Hank Bull, Sharla Sava, Scott Watson, eds, *Robert Filliou, From Political to Poetical Economy* (Vancouver: Morris and Ellen Belkin Art Gallery, 1995).

“Are you interested in art?” When someone responded to his call, he would add: “you know, I have a gallery—here it is!” showing the contents of his hat.<sup>2</sup> The meaning of the French expression “couvre chef” alludes to the piece of cloth that protects the head (chief) and as Filliou said, covers up the brain. A few years after Filliou established his “Galerie Légitime,” the curator Harald Szeemann organized the exhibition “When Attitudes become form: Live in Your Head,” (1969), this title foregrounding intentionality as the epicenter of both art production and aesthetic experience. Coined around the same time as Filliou’s hat metaphor, the notion of immersive environment built on the drug-induced and anthropomorphic scenario of a spectator moving in someone else’s body or brain. However, Filliou’s idea of a “portable gallery” found a somewhat protestant (and non-anthropomorphic) equivalent in dealer’s Seth Siegelau’s proposition of rendering the exhibition event obsolete by restricting art to ubiquitous printed matter. Siegelau



suggested that architectural space was no longer relevant for the artists whose works existed solely through linguistic propositions, photographs or other transmitted data. But, as a number of historians of conceptualism noted, this spatio-temporal compression coincided with wider access to cheap air travel for artists or other cultural producers.<sup>3</sup> In order to make their gestures more or less legible, artists

had to be present physically in each node of the international network they helped to create. In 1973, Filliou visited the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, then hotbed of conceptualism, as the first stop of a trans-Canadian grand tour before heading to Toronto, Calgary and Vancouver. During a meeting with the students, he explained his concept of the Eternal Network (or *Fête Permanente*): “The Eternal Network is at base a possibility for looking at social organizations—there is always someone asleep or someone awake, someone



3 On the traveling artist and conceptual art, see Howard Sigerman, *Art Subjects: Making Artists in the American University* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

dreaming asleep, someone dreaming awake, someone eating, someone hungry, someone fighting, someone loving, someone making money, someone broke, someone traveling, someone staying out, someone helping, someone hindering, someone enjoying, someone suffering, someone indifferent, someone starting, someone stopping. THE NETWORK IS ETERNAL.”<sup>4</sup> After this Canadian sojourn, Filliou noticed with much surprise that his ideas of decentralization were taking a material and institutional shape, making him believe that a zeitgeist was somewhat at work (and theory could become practice). While they did not blur completely the divide between life and art, Filliou’s Vancouver peers used his principles locally to build communication vehicles amongst themselves and to reach other artists in the USA and Europe. I investigated elsewhere how the Canadian ARCs and artists collectives became fully-fledged institutions during the early seventies when their members recycled models defined in the fifties and sixties by protagonists of the European and American avant-garde.<sup>5</sup> This narrative did not, however, start with increased autonomy and shift toward a state of co-optation. From the outset, the artists that created the first ARCs had access to subsidies from the State. The safety net of grants and make-work programs enabled and even encouraged self-determination in a liberal kind of way—making it less a “political necessity” than a lifestyle among other lifestyles of the period. The establishment

5 Vincent Bonin, ed., *Documentary Protocols/Protocoles Documentaires (1967-1975)* (Montreal: Leonard and Bina Ellen Gallery, 2010).



of counterpublics was just another strategy to deal with economic possibilities and contingencies.

Every time we reinvigorate old models it seems that we attempt to create equivalencies between metaphors. In this view, some still believe that there is a "pure" non-bureaucratic moment when artists reinvented themselves, and that this primary context can be retrieved at will to build new, looser, paradigms. Re-performing grand gestures of the 1960s and 1970s today under the guise of "political imagination" thus only results in misrecognition or blind repetition. Anton Vidokle recently suggested that science fiction would be a good way to circumvent the "narrow dialectic between state support vs. the art market" in discussion about alternative institutions. His proposal of making a film on the future of artists-run spaces set in 2084 is most likely tainted by cynicism and tongue-in-cheek humor, but nevertheless represents some kind of escapist scenario.<sup>6</sup> e-flux became the portal to a small portion of the art world coalescing in the ubiquitous rectangle of our personal computer screens. The artist's website, with small jpegs of his or her work displayed alongside statements of intentionality could be seen as a banal rekindling of Filliou's Galerie Légitime. So on and so forth. In the framework of semiocapitalism, the category "artist" has become even more expandable and abstract. There is no longer any possibility for protagonists in the art field

to escape networked (and instrumentalized) relationships. Artworks are becoming fetishes referring to the artist by proxy and are thus endowed with subjectivity while artists need to perform their subjectivity in return to prop these objects back into the network. Carrying your art with yourself, in hat or elsewhere, is now mandatory. Just like Filliou's Galerie Légitime that propelled a narrative of self-determination and turned it into a pitch of self-promotion, this ubiquitous state is performed through repeated speech acts. Since it is not possible to escape from regressive metaphoric meaning, there is a constant need to always superimpose the old (utopian) familiar tropes on new unfamiliar and even more alienating situations. Recently a number of theorists and activists complained about the limitations of "immanent institutional critique" or a sociological analysis of the art field. For instance, Brian Holmes is rejecting this model and advocating an approach that would enable us to "transform the initial discipline, to end its isolation, to open up new possibilities of expression, analysis, cooperation and commitment."



The projects he brings in as counterproposals “can no longer be unambiguously defined as art. They are based instead on a circulation between disciplines, often involving the real critical reserve of marginal or counter-cultural positions – social movements, political associations, squats, autonomous universities – which can’t be reduced to an all-embracing institution.”<sup>7</sup> This belief in art’s capacity



for social change, bypassing institutional over-determination, nevertheless reaches its limits when, in the USA, some study programs ask students to define their artistic practice from the outset as community work while ignoring a discussion from earlier on in the nineties, around the contradictions (and problems) of repurposing artworks as “service provisions.”<sup>8</sup> I am not stating that activism falls into a dead end, quite the contrary. I wonder, however, if the right exit strategy—or way toward emancipation—might be instead to leave the field, like many artists did in the middle of the sev-

7 Brian Holmes, “Extradisciplinary Investigations. Towards a New Critique of Institutions,” European Institute for Progressive Cultural Policies (<http://eipcp.net/transversa/0106/holmes/en>)

8 On art as “service provision,” see Andrea Fraser, “What’s Intangible, Transitory, Mediating, Participatory and Rendered in the Public Sphere” (1996), in *Museum Highlights: The Writings of Andrea Fraser* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005) 47-54 (part one), 55-80 (part two).

entities, and live in “the political” without trying to generate any kind of (visible) byproducts? Or, on the other hand, if this process should start by acknowledging the limits of what one can do in the field itself, and finding the right form that could represent (or shape) the entanglement that a political position can take by risking of being merely the production of symbolic value?

3. “She said: Just as art cannot exist outside the field of art, we cannot exist outside the field of art, at least not as artists, critics, curators, etc.... if there is no outside for us, it is not because the institution is perfectly closed, or exists as an apparatus in a ‘totally administered world,’ or has grown all-encompassing in size and scope. It is because the institution is inside of us, and we can’t get outside of ourselves.”

Most of you will know the quote above, as it became a mantra of sorts (and is most often used to build up the aforementioned arguments about the necessity of exit strategies). I decided to not attribute it to its author and see what ghost of meaning could be generated by this kind of displacement—the absence of a proper name. But rupture and collage is not the point here. A few months ago, I met a friend who is a choreographer and dancer. I thought it would be interesting to have a discussion about this quote. He had no knowledge of the debates around institutional

critique, and was quite surprised by visual artists' over-investments into these questions, as in his field they remained a blind spot so to say. "We rarely talk about institutions or perhaps, we don't see them as something that should be addressed overtly in our work." When asked about the role of institution(s) in his own discipline, he explained how his movements on an everyday basis were inextricably tied to a formal training as a modern dancer. My friend reminded me that he always listened to an inner voice while moving on stage; this monologue could be voiced out loud on demand. It would basically entail to a series of technical cues following each other, in simultaneity with the movement of one's legs or arms. He then added that the desire to go back to an original state of the "everyday" would be impossible to fulfill at that point. He was always dancing. When I was working at an art and technology foundation a few years ago, I met an artist who decided to have a chip filled with personal data implanted under the skin. The violence of "incorporating" personal information spoke about a perverted desire for autonomy through embracing the uttermost form of alienation. Having it "there," close to the body, reaffirmed the belief that she owned herself, while paradoxically reinstating the Foucauldian assertion that the "soul is the prison," not the other way around. When I started writing this text, my first idea was to explore this notion of internalization or incorporation

as some kind of horror film scenario, the counter-metaphor of the utopia (non-place) of the portable. The smuggler, for instance, has to find the right way to shift illegal merchandise across borders without showing to the custom agent that he is transporting more than his luggage and himself as a registered body. With the illegal object seemingly made invisible, it can erupt in language during interrogation. The theorists Irit Rogoff and Simon Harvey made the smuggler into another metaphor for subversive semiotic behaviors.<sup>9</sup> However, I have a hard time going beyond the real life-threatening necessity that obliges someone to take the risk of illegally crossing a border. By becoming metaphor, the word is easily shifted here into a discursive register that describes Western mutable subjectivity instead of survival, thus becoming a-historical (just like the concept of the nomad, a few years before Rogoff's text). The figure of the spokesperson, as both abstract and real, is perhaps more apt to bring about the intricacies—and horror—of being possessed by an institutional being.

In French, "porte parole" is the word for





“spokesperson.” It means metaphorically to carry (porter) the speech of another person, or a collectivity. In one instance, he or she is endowed with the power to “ventriloquize” the absent voice of a corporation, as it is defined as a being, and individual with rights and privileges, but without a body<sup>10</sup>. By its sole presence, the delegated subject conveys momentarily a visibility to what would have remained an abstraction. The spokesperson must master a certain discourse of embodiment. If vulnerability is felt while he or she is speaking, the listener will perceive it as the weaknesses of the larger entity it represents, thus the gap between the voice and the (invisible) body will appear. For that reason, the failures or the inadequacies of the spokesperson (even if they might be those of the institution) need to be identified before they erupt as contingencies into the public realm. The assertion that one cannot be fully inside or outside is made clear in that situation: the spokesperson can’t express a personal opinion, or at least, his views should be synchronous with the “semantic consistency” of the collective being for which he is the delegated mouthpiece. Self-censorship operates in a similar fashion, as one will build a shell around real (political) beliefs, or even ambivalence, to keep a privileged position within a given social order, an attitude that is most common in the art world, where one’s survival depends on

10 My musings on the spokesperson are inspired by Luc Boltanski’s book, *On Critique: A Sociology of Emancipation* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011).

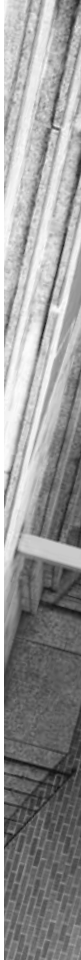
the maintenance of precarious contacts. In another situation, the spokesperson doesn't represent an institution or a doxa, but rather he is the one who words the grievances of disenfranchised people. Foucault and others had addressed the ethical dimension of this displaced speech through the phrase: "indignity of speaking for others," describing the difficulty of finding the right ways to represent an oppressed or silenced group. However, one does not have to be in such power imbalances to feel the shame of borrowing voices. It is happening right now, as I write a statement of purpose, in the guise of a conclusion for this text, describing a collective project in the absence of my collaborators, by piecing together ideas from half-remembered conversations.

4. "We conceived a project whose purpose and form yet needs to be defined—it could be a magazine or a small gallery. We called it *L'escalier*, having in mind Jacques Diderot's *L'esprit de l'escalier*, an expression he coined in his book *Paradoxes sur le comédien* to describe the regrets one feels after ending a conversation, descending the staircase, thinking about the witty words one could have said to an interlocutor that would have "won" the verbal battle. This expression then became a popular saying, describing the lingering feeling of a missed encounter, unspoken words, and sometimes (in op-



position to Diderot) the impression that what was said over the course of a conversation had been misinterpreted. It is however only one aspect of the referential constellations that the staircase can bring along. If I remember well, this motif came up in our conversations around the Parachute metaphor, once used as the title of the now-defunct Montreal-based magazine. When the publication was launched in 1975, the parachute alluded to a necessity of slowing down the process of assimilating (and to a certain extent, evaluating) information on contemporary art coming from the rest of Canada, Europe and the United States. We believed that the staircase could bring along a vast amount of associations, because it is the arena where we enter and exit a situation. In his novel *La vie mode d'emploi*, George Perec uses it as a divider between chapters in which he recounts the existence of an apartment building and its tenants. While describing the noise heard between closed doors and echoed in this common space, he alludes to what will happen next (...)"

Ascending the stairs. Inner voice: Today, I decided that it would be the end. After three months, I began to feel that this was going in circles. I cannot cope anymore with his patronizing gaze. Each time I see him, his shorthand advice make me feel that I will never be an adult. We don't share the same vision of the world. He firmly believes that I can be happy and get back to a normal life after making the right decisions. When I get out of the confessional



mode and bring in viewpoints about the unfolding of my speech he says that I am losing precious minutes. Therefore, I stopped being myself and started playing the role of someone who has good will. Perhaps this time around, I should say to his face that his views are simplistic, tainted with prejudices and he doesn't deserve my money. I am descending the stairs. Inner voice: I regret having white-lied to him instead of enacting the scenario that I had in mind. This was again a waste of time and money. I am not coming back. I'll just call sick and leave a message on his answering machine. If he suggests an appointment for the following week, I will tell the truth.

Now, back to the computer, I am listening to the chatter of faraway friends.



## **161 Gallon Gallery**

### Between Two Floors

The 161 Gallon Gallery is located on the 1.5th floor of 6014 Cunard Street. Its dimensions are 3.5 x 3.5 x 3.5 feet, and the gallery holds 161 imperial gallons. It is located in the main stairwell before the first landing. What the original purpose of the space was, we do not know. What we do know is that it is a carefully crafted cube of space, complete with hardwood floors and a door.

The 161 Gallon Gallery was conceived of as a think tank—a space existing between floors and realities, like a landing for thought and ideas. In that way the 161



Gallon Gallery is boundless, as ideas and memories are, with fuzzy perimeters, and no hard edges. There are no constrictions; the walls melt into the darkness of the space. On the other hand, the space is a perfect box, confining in its very essence, ready to contain and hold whatever is put forth into it. It is this double experience of intimacy and boundlessness that makes it a sublime space. The works that inhabit it take on the sublime.

When you experience work in 161 you are almost always on the outside, rarely ever inhabiting the space. In this way you are experiencing it from the same



point of view, from outside, through the doorway.

When you are thinking you are withdrawn from the world, into yourself, yet still part of the world. 161 is a similar withdrawal. You are often confronted with the work alone, withdrawn from the world in the narrow stairwell, perhaps into the small space. What you are left with are the impressions of the ideas that are presented. But you are confronted by your own ideas through the impressions of what is within the gallery.

Alternative spaces, of alternative sizes and of alternative contexts, are important to the cultural ecosys-

tem. They allow for the mixing of art and life, instigating tensions between different systems of value, and allowing for more experimental and emergent practices to be worked through. This is especially true when artist-run centres, galleries, and museums all program years in advance. Without alternative spaces where will the truly spontaneous work happen?

This space has been important to the three of us because it was a foray into the world of the gallery system and being out of school we wanted to develop a curatorial practice. It was at once an open and less structured environment for artists to experiment with ideas, at the same time we had imposed an institutional rigour of the gallery system on our own private lives, injecting our home with this foreign entity. But isn't this what ideas are to ourselves? Foreign entities that enter our minds, inhabiting and imposing upon ourselves a sort of condition, that with the right mix of spontaneity and rigour, begets concepts and creations.



Miriam Moren



## **Museum of Mental Objects**

MUSEUM OF MENTAL OBJECTS



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# DIY MoMO

Do It Yourself

## Museum of Mental Objects Manual

*DIY MoMO*  
*Do It Yourself Museum of Mental Objects Manual*

A work by  
Judy Freya Sibayan  
for the

*World Portable Gallery Convention 2012*  
September 1-29, 2012  
Eyelevel Gallery  
Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada

(Please print these 4 PDF pages  
back to back on two pieces of letter-size paper  
then cut, fold and staple them together  
into a 13-page manual on how  
to be a Museum of Mental Objects)

Staple here

Fold here

Staple here

curatorial team Filipa Oliveira and Miguel Amado for the section *Curators Desk at Madrid Art Fair 2010*. Lecture-performance refers to the bringing together of performative and educational traditions within a pedagogical context. Artists can present their work or a specific project through an informal discussion with the audience, devising a discursive platform within the context of an art fair. We are looking for proposals that consist of one night presentations with a maximum of 2 hours taking place in a four-square meters booth. The selected proposals have to be carried out by artists based in Madrid during the city's Fair week (February 17-21) and cannot require any budget or specific equipment. *Just Madrid Art Fair* will take place between February 18-21 at El Madero in Madrid and the lectures-performances will take place every night at 19H00, except on Sunday, which will be at 17H00."

Sibyan proposed to perform MoMo and it was selected by Oliveira and Amado to be one of the four lecture-performances. But Sibyan not being based in Madrid proposed instead that her artist-friend Cecilia Avanceña who was based in Madrid perform as a MoMo Gallery and be the one to collect, install, and exhibit works in MoMo at the *2010 Just Madrid Art Fair*. A MoMo gallery was thus constructed for this purpose.

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Works of Winged Women  
Manila

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Printed anywhere and everywhere.

Documenta 12 at Kassel in 2007 installed a work by Costinas in MoMo as a result of the conversation during dinner.

19. On October 8, 2002, at the conference “Locus: Interventions in Art Practice” Sibayan formally opened and inaugurated MoMo by collecting, installing and exhibiting the work of Lani Maestro, a keynote speaker at the conference and a friend of Sibayan. Right before delivering her paper entitled “Paradise Lost, Parodies Gained, The Art of Making Things Visible as/in Art,” Sibayan invited Maestro to create a work for the opening premier of MoMo, a spur of the moment decision to demonstrate how MoMo works.

20. Sibayan teaches at De La Salle University in Manila and when needed she performs MoMo in her class to teach about contemporary art.

21. As part of her presentation of her paper “The Museum of Mental Objects: The Art of Making Art Invisible,” at the workshop sponsored by MoMA NYC, Sibayan scheduled to collect, install and exhibit the work of Kith Tsang Tak Ping. Before concluding her paper, she invited the artist on the stage to install his work. But MoMo failed to collect his work because he whispered it in what MoMo heard/thought was Mandarin.

MoMo has not been a very aggressive museum in terms of collecting artworks for exhibition. In the past ten years, MoMo has collected only twenty-two artworks. And it has lost six of these works. In some years, it didn’t collect any works at all. On one occasion, it wasn’t able to collect a work because the artist whispered it in a language which MoMo heard was Mandarin. MoMo can only collect in Filipino, Ilocano, French and English. MoMo also collects sounds made by the human voice it can memorize and recite. MoMo collects and exhibits only works that it understands.

22. MoMo has delivered and published papers and theorized about itself as a 21st century museum practice.

23. MoMo has lost five artworks but has not informed any of the artists of these losses. MoMo has lost two works by Cosmin Costinas, one work by Tanya Lukin-Linklater, one work by Cecilia Avanceña, one work by Terry Euyang and another work by an artist whose name MoMo doesn’t even remember.

24. Sometime in early February 2010, Sibayan answered an open-call for a lecture-performance announced in *e-flux*. It read: “Open call for four lecture-performances for the project *On the Table*, organized by the Lisbon-based

September 1, 2012

To the first ten Museum of Mental Objects,

Thank you for deciding to be one of the first ten Museum of Mental Objects. This manual is a guide on how to become a MoMo for life. As a MoMo, you will be able to make invisible art visible; conserve resources by making art in the scale of everyday-life; exhibit art that will defy commodification; make art of and bring art to the everyday as a means to parody the white cube; speak truth to power or more specifically do Institutional Critique.

Ten years of research and development went into prototyping MoMo — now called the Ur-MoMo.<sup>1</sup> Thank you for helping celebrate these ten years of RnD culminating in the publication of this manual to guide you on how to become one of the ten newest MoMOS premiering at the 2012 World Portable Gallery 2012 Convention in Halifax, Nova Scotia.<sup>2</sup> In keeping with celebrating the portable and the DIY, this manual was designed for each copy to be printed only on two pieces of paper with instructions on how to assemble it into a portable.

The specifics of the research and development that went into Ur-MoMo will be cited here as endnotes. Please add to the MoMo RnD database by updating Ur-MoMo of your own experience as one of the first ten DIY MoMo.

Wishing you all the best,

Ur-MoMo

Fold here

Top A2  
Print back  
to back with  
Top A1

## DIY MoMo MANUAL

### Do it yourself Museum of Mental Objects Manual

#### Setting up yourself as a Museum of Mental Objects

What you need

To be a MoMo you need

1. the commitment and the stamina to perform as a museum for life;
2. to be both the museum and the museum curator;
3. to speak truth to power or more specifically do Institutional Critique;<sup>3</sup>

#### Deciding on the kind of art that will be exhibited in MoMo

In deciding the kind of art to be exhibited in MoMo, it will all depend on who you invite to exhibit. Invited artists must conceive works in the languages you understand and speak.<sup>4</sup> They can also conceive works that are sounds that you can repeat, memorize and remember without difficulty. Next, these artists must be those

1. you like and respect and whose art you like and respect;
2. who are your friends whose work you like and respect;
3. recommended by people you meet in conferences who you like and respect or who appreciate your art;<sup>5</sup>
4. who, after experiencing MoMo, express their appreciation of MoMo and offer an artwork for exhibition in MoMo; but first and foremost you have to like and respect these artists and their art;<sup>6</sup>
5. who invite you to perform as MoMo during the closing program of their exhibition and you in turn invite them to install a work in MoMo as part of your performance for the event;<sup>7</sup>

8. During the reception of MoMo at the Privataden, artist Gun Holmstrom was in conversation with Sibayan and from the conversation resulted an artwork by Holmstrom which they installed in MoMo right then and there.

9. Cecilia Avanceña, a close friend of Sibayan installed her work in MoMo via Skype. The date of the installation of the work was not noted down.

10. Karla Sachse, a friend of Sibayan was scheduled to install a work in MoMo during its performance at the *National Review of Live Art Festival* at the Tramway in Glasgow, Scotland in February 12, 2006. The performance was scheduled at 6PM but Sachse had to leave for Berlin at 4PM. As a solution, Sachse first whispered the work to her friend Varsha Nair who later whispered the work to MoMo at the appointed time of the formal opening of MoMo at the festival.

11. MoMo has been performed formally in the following galleries: Peer Gallery Space, London; Main Gallery Cultural Center of the Philippines; Lumiere Café Gallery, Makati City, Philippines; Avenue Art Gallery, Quezon City, Philippines.

12. MoMo has performed at the Hong Kong Art Centre Auditorium in Hong Kong.

13. MoMo has performed at the Timms Theatre Lobby of the University of Alberta in Edmonton, Alberta Canada.

14. MoMo has performed at the conference "Locus: Interventions in Art Practice" held at the Lopez Training Center, Manila, Philippines. Sponsored by The Japan Foundation. October 8-9, 2002.

15. Sibayan performed as MoMo at the workshop "Museum Practices of the 21st Century," at the Hong Kong Art Centre in November 15, 2002. The workshop was conducted and sponsored by the Museum of Modern Art, New York. Sibayan also presented a paper entitled "The Museum of Mental Objects: The Art of Making Art Invisible."

16. MoMo performed at the *National Review Live Art Festival*, at the Tramway in Glasgow, Scotland in February 12, 2006

17. MoMo performed at the *Just Madrid Art Fair* in February 19, 2010 as a critique of the art market.

18. Sibayan while having dinner with one of the organizers of the Documenta 12 Magazines, Cosmin Costinas and other people attending the

4. MoMo adopted this collecting policy for itself after Sibayan heard one of the curators of MoMA, New York talk about MoMA's collecting policy during the workshop "Museum Practices of the 21st Century." The curator stated that MoMA, New York only collects art that their curators understand. Price speaks in English and understands French, Sibayan speaks in English and Filipino and understands Ilocano.

5. Essential to MoMo is not the quality of the artwork exhibited. Its primary concern is that it respects the artists it exhibits or the people who recommend artists to exhibit in MoMo. Artist Tanya Lukin Linklater whose work was collected, installed and exhibited in MoMo in March 2008 at the Timms Center Lobby, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, was recommended by Lianne McFavish who Sibayan first met in 1998 at the conference "(In)disciplinas: Estética e Historia del Arte en el Cruce de los Discursos" sponsored by the Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México held in Queretaro, Mexico from September 23 to 27, 1998. McFavish and Sibayan were presenting papers at the conference. McFavish was appreciative of Sibayan's work *Scapular Gallery Nomad* which she was performing at the time and the focus of her paper entitled "Scapular Gallery Nomad: Beyond the Limits of the Center and Into One's Own." Ten years later, McFavish invited Sibayan to travel to Edmonton with a grant from the University of Alberta where McFavish teaches. One of her works was to perform as MoMo.

6. After Sibayan's performance of MoMo at a small private theater called Privattdaden in Berlin early September 2007, one of the audience approached her expressing his appreciation of MoMo and offered to exhibit a work in MoMo. He happened to be the artist whose installation was on exhibit on the walls of the theater. Sibayan liked the artist and his work. Unfortunately, MoMo lost the work and has forgotten his name.

7. Cesare Syjuco invited Sibayan to take part in the closing program of his exhibition at the Main Gallery of the Cultural Center of the Philippines. Sibayan decided to perform MoMo and in turn invited Syjuco to install a work in MoMo during her performance. Sibayan now forgets the date of the event.

6. who are friends offering a work created as a result of your conversation with them during a reception celebrating your performance of MoMo.<sup>8</sup>

### **Installing an artwork**

To install an artwork

1. request the artist to whisper the work to you. He/she can even tell you the artwork over the phone or over Skype.<sup>9</sup> If the artist is not able to whisper/tell the work to you, he/she can whisper/tell the work to another artist who will be the one to whisper the work to you;<sup>10</sup>
2. consider the work properly installed once you have memorized it. The whispering can be done over and over again until you have memorized the work. You must never write down the work as a way of remembering it. The work must always be a mental object. It must never take any other shape or form but a mental object.
3. on the scheduled date, you can install one or several works.

### **Scheduling the installation of artworks**

To schedule the installation of an artwork

1. you can announce the activity as a formal performance of MoMo at a gallery,<sup>11</sup> in a museum, in an auditorium of an art center<sup>12</sup> or in any other kind of art space such as a theater lobby,<sup>13</sup> or in events such as art conferences,<sup>14</sup> workshops,<sup>15</sup> performance art festivals<sup>16</sup> or art fairs.<sup>17</sup> In this situation you have an audience to exhibit the work to.
2. you can install a work informally and spontaneously anytime and anywhere, face-to-face while having dinner with people attending a major exhibition,<sup>18</sup> or during a reception of your performance for example. You can also install works over the phone or via Skype. You may or may not have an audience on this occasion.

## Opening the museum and exhibiting the artworks

To open the museum and exhibit the artworks

1. you can do this as a formal or an informal event. As a formal event, you may or may not install a work. If you decide to install a work, you need to exhibit the work right away by reciting the work back to the audience. During these occasions, you will have to talk about MoMo before and after the installation and exhibition of the work.<sup>19</sup>

2. on a daily basis, you need to have an audience which is anyone interested in experiencing the museum. Therefore you can open MoMo anytime anywhere for as long as there is an interested audience. You can open the museum during a forum on performance art, or during a conversation where you are asked about the kind of art you do, or the art you've been doing lately; during art openings of other artists' exhibitions, or while having dinner with family and friends. You can open the museum to those who approach you having heard about you as MoMo. Or if you teach, open MoMo to teach about art.<sup>20</sup> Open the museum in any situation, anytime and everywhere as long as there is an interested audience. Any number of audience is an audience. One person is an audience:

3. you need to say, "the museum is now open" then recite one of the works or all the works in the museum depending on how interested the audience is or how much time they have or how well you remember the works at the time you open the museum. On this occasion, you may engage in a discussion of the museum if your audience is interested.

## Collecting works for exhibition in the museum

MoMo collects works only in languages it can speak and understand. It also collects works that are sounds made by the human voice that it can memorize, remember and recite back to an audience.<sup>21</sup>

## Endnotes

1. For the past ten years conceptual artist Judy Freya Shoyan and independent curator and writer Matt Price have been the Museum of Mental Objects. They conceived the museum over a period of three years before opening it to the public in October 2002. Shoyan inaugurated herself as MoMo in Manila, Philippines while Price inaugurated himself as MoMo in Birmingham, UK. They are both the museum and the museum's curators. For the purpose of differentiating them as the original MoMo from the ten new future MoMos, Price and Shoyan as MoMo are referred to in this manual as Ur-MoMo for the very first time. But in these endnotes, Ur-MoMo will still be referred to simply as MoMo.

In March 2007, Shoyan traveled to London under a UK Visiting Arts Artist to Artist International Scheme Grant. One of her activities was to perform MoMo at Peer Gallery Space. Price who was based in London then, joined her to perform together as MoMo. They collected, installed, and exhibited the works of Richard Grayson, Ragni Sha, Erika Tan, Sara Haq, Gavin Turk, Alimrah Azadeh, Susan Treister, Brian Catling, David Medalla, and Hayley Newman. Ingrid Swenson, curator of Peer recommended Turk, Grayson, Newman, Azadeh, Treister and Catling to exhibit works in MoMo. Shoyan and Swenson met in Manila on October 8, 2002, at the conference "Locus: Interventions in Art Practice" where they were both presenting papers. Each curator collected, installed and exhibited five works.

2. The initial plan for establishing ten new MoMos in celebration of the first decade of MoMo was for Shoyan to workshop ten performance artists to be future MoMos as a pre-event for the *World Portrait Gallery Convention 2012* scheduled September 2012. This initial proposal was entitled "Multiply MoMo" or "MoMoX10." She was scheduled to hold the workshop and have their premier opening/performance in Halifax, Nova Scotia sponsored by Eyelevel Gallery, sometime second week of March 2012. But Shoyan became ill and had to cancel her trip to Halifax. This manual takes the place of the cancelled workshop.

3. A parody of the very same art institution to which Shoyan belongs. MoMo is an auto-critique. It is thus the work of the inside-outsider, the ex-centric—the praxis of Institutional Critique.

### Reading up on MoMO

To know more about MoMO, please read the following essays uploaded or published in the Net:

1. "HerMe(s)" in *Ctrl+P Journal of Contemporary Art*, No. 16  
[www.ctrlp-artjournal.org/pdfs/CtrlP\\_Issue16.pdf](http://www.ctrlp-artjournal.org/pdfs/CtrlP_Issue16.pdf)
2. "The Museum of Mental Objects: The Art of Making Art Invisible"  
[www.ctrlp-artjournal.org/pdfs/MoMO\\_Sibayan.pdf](http://www.ctrlp-artjournal.org/pdfs/MoMO_Sibayan.pdf)
3. "The Museum of Mental Objects: Another cog in the status machinery?"  
[www.ctrlp-artjournal.org/pdfs/MoMO\\_Price.pdf](http://www.ctrlp-artjournal.org/pdfs/MoMO_Price.pdf)
4. "Memory—Parody—Counter-Memory: Judy Freya Sibayan's Museum of Mental Objects"  
[www.ctrlp-artjournal.org/pdfs/MoMO\\_MarieLeduc](http://www.ctrlp-artjournal.org/pdfs/MoMO_MarieLeduc)
5. "My portables arose from...Thoughts on the work of the ex-centric" in *Ctrl+P Journal of Contemporary Art*, No. 17  
[www.ctrlp-artjournal.org/pdfs/CtrlP\\_Issue17.pdf](http://www.ctrlp-artjournal.org/pdfs/CtrlP_Issue17.pdf)

### Problems?

If you have problems setting up yourself as a MoMO, if you have problems being a MoMO or if you have further inquiries, please email Ur-MoMO at: [museumofmentalobjectsprototype@gmail.com](mailto:museumofmentalobjectsprototype@gmail.com).

### Publicizing the museum

To publicize the museum

1. MoMO is allowed to write press releases;
2. MoMO is encouraged to theorize and write about itself as a 21st century museum practice; and to present papers about itself in conferences. It is also encouraged to publish these papers;<sup>22</sup>
3. MoMO necessarily speaks about itself every time it opens;
4. when interviewed, MoMO must never allow these publicists or writers to write down the artworks or document them in any other shape or form. The works must always remain as mental objects (words or sounds created only by the human voice). They must never ever take any other shape or form but mental objects with the goal to have the works resist commodification;
5. in addition to the papers written and published about MoMO, you may wish to have calling cards printed and if you decide to do so please email Ur-MoMO for the logo and the design of the calling card. These papers, publications and calling cards are the only images and non-mental objects allowed MoMO.

### Returning artworks

To return a work, MoMO must whisper it back or say the work back to the artist face-to-face, via a phone call or via Skype.

### Conserving artworks

To conserve the artworks

1. they must remain only and always as mental objects. MoMO must ensure that the works never take any other form but mental

objects. MoMo must do all that is needed to remember the works. But MoMo must never write down the works to aid itself to remember the works:

2. MoMo must request its audience not to photograph, audio or video record the museum while it is reciting/exhibiting the artworks. The audience is requested never to write down any of the works as they hear or heard it.

### **Losing artworks**

There is only one way MoMo loses an artwork. If MoMo forgets to remember the work, then the work is lost forever. An audience's memory of the work is not the work. An artist's memory of the work is not the work. When MoMo loses an artwork, MoMo must inform the artist about this loss. MoMo is not obligated to compensate the artist for lost works.<sup>23</sup>

### **Constructing new museum galleries**

To construct a new gallery to expand the museum, MoMo can ask an artist-friend to be a MoMo Gallery to collect, install, and exhibit works that you yourself as MoMo are not able to collect, install and exhibit. MoMo can construct as many galleries as it needs or wishes.<sup>24</sup>

### **Maintaining and managing the museum**

#### *Exhibition contracts*

All contracts between MoMo and the artists are done verbally. MoMo promises to conserve the works as best it can. Artists must agree that their works will not be insured. Artists can request their

works to be returned anytime. MoMo is not obligated to compensate the artist for lost works.

#### *Staffing*

The museum curator who is also the museum is the only staff of the Museum of Mental Objects. In case MoMo constructs a gallery to expand the museum, this gallery will be run by the curator of the gallery who is also the MoMo Gallery.

#### *Budget and resources*

In terms of resources needed to run the museum, the administration of the museum and its galleries will depend only on the everyday-life resources of the museum curator or the gallery curator.

### **Contributing to the MoMo RnD database**

To contribute to the MoMo RnD Database, please email Ur-MoMo your experiences as a MoMo at:  
museumofmentalobjectprototype@gmail.com.

Ur-MoMo also requests that on the occasion you as MoMo write papers, essays or produce any publicity materials, these materials be shared also as part of the database. This database will be made available/accessed in the Net.

### **Closing MoMo for good**

On the occasion that you wish to end performing as a MoMo or to close yourself as MoMo for good, first inform Ur-MoMo of your decision. Then return all the works to the artists. If possible, please email Ur-MoMo about all your history and experiences as having been a MoMo.





## Nanomuseum

The Nanomuseum was founded in the mid-1990s. It grew—as many exhibitions and projects do—out of discussions with artists. In this specific case, it was a discussion with German artist, Hans-Peter Feldmann, who is based in Düsseldorf and has done visionary work since the 1960s, not only in terms of exhibitions but also with books. He shifted his art practice into other activities and was also running a shop in which he sold all kinds of objects. When the shop was still open in the 1990s, I once visited him. He was selling these small frames, and I bought one

that subsequently became the readymade architecture of the Nanomuseum.

The idea grew out of a discussion about how the frame could become a portable museum. We discussed predecessors such as Robert Filliou's Museum Chapeau [sic] or Félix Fénéon's own museum-on-the-move which featured two small Seurat paintings that were inserted into special velour-lined pockets of his vest.<sup>1</sup>

But to come back to the Nanomuseum, the idea was that this museum could host exhibitions and could be carried anywhere. It was a representative of the lightest possible structure a museum could have and at the same time, a kind of parody on nano-technology. It would be a completely free museum so that there wouldn't be any constraints on having regular exhibitions whatsoever. So sometimes there might not be a show for three months, and then there might be two exhibitions per day. There are all kinds of possibilities, after all, when you have time as freedom rather than constraint.


There's also no obligation to fill the space, but one can fill the small frame easily enough whenever there is a desire or necessity to do so. And as I said before, the museum is free, or, to paraphrase what Alighierro e Boetti once said, the museum can move across waves, "and the waves are composed of mountains and valleys, intervals, pauses and silence."

The Nanomuseum functions as a conversation piece... but it's a migrating conversation piece, so wherev-

er the museum goes, it not only keeps track of its findings, but also actually triggers all kinds of dialogues. There's always someone (either me or someone else, as other people also carry the museum around with them) showing the museum to friends and to other people, including passers-by, etc. So it often even triggers direct feedback, and can be an excuse or pretext to start a discussion. It's a bit like what Douglas Gordon once said, "The object is only there to trigger a conversation." So it's not about the object, but about what it can instigate. ...

As the Nanomuseum has no nano-budget, there





are no nano-sponsors! The Nanomuseum also has no permanent collection. All the shows are temporary. The idea is that in the end, it should all be published. It could be printed in a book and then everybody could do their own Nanomuseum. Commercial publishers, however, seem to be uninterested in nano-books, ergo, thus far no one has actually agreed to publish it. The publication remains an unrealized project, which is about testimonies, really. I think it's important that it can make trajectories from disciplines and through different activities. As Robert Musil once said, "If art still exists, it is where we least expect to find it." You wouldn't expect art to happen on an airplane, in a taxi, or on the subway, but that's exactly the places where the Nanomuseum is very often, or was very often shown. They are unexpected encounters. (Interestingly, the Nanomuseum is famous in Japan. That is, there have been many articles published about it there.)


The Nanomuseum is a portable laboratory; as the late Francisco Varela once commented, in establishing a discipline of research and science, one is bound to the invention of a topographical place.<sup>2</sup> Varela was certainly one of the most important thinkers on autopoiesis and self-organization within the art context. Varela has always reflected upon experimental/subjective science, which played a major role in the 19th century, but has disappeared increasingly from the Western context over the course of the 20th century and has survived only within the traditions of Buddhist, Hindu and Taoist thought.

For our show, Varela conceived of a kind of subjective portable laboratory. An instructive text was pinned to the wall next to a large pillow on wheels on which one could sit and meditate:

Become the laboratory by standing still or sitting on the cushion provided. Proceed to do nothing. Relax your posture and attitude, and lightly observe whatever comes into experience. That's the experiment. Note the specific manifestations of the mind as if they were data. Repeat this gesture full of presence, of mindfulness, as many times as you can. The laboratory is now portable and you may carry it with you wherever you go. Keep track of your findings! (...)

And it's obviously interesting to think that if the Nanomuseum is embedded in a moving topographical place where the procedures can actually be carried wherever one wants, then it becomes a very different kind of situation. (...)

Filmmakers like Chris Marker or Jonas Mekas also did shows in the Nanomuseum, as did Yoko Ono who exhibited nano-drawings, and Gilbert and George made a "nanoshitpicture." Koo Jeong-a's exhibition in the Nanomuseum converted the museum into a shelter for a nano-dog. (...) Douglas Gordon's project has yet to be realized... or one might think that it happened already. Gordon had temporarily lost the small frame in a pub in Glasgow, but then it reappeared. So that accounts for the unrealized project. It happened where we didn't see it. But



we are actually bringing the Nanomuseum project to an end. It has a life cycle and then it will die. Why should the Nanomuseum last forever? Both Toyo Ito and Cedric Price have already pointed out that buildings can die like people do.

Douglas Gordon is planning the funeral where there will be a coffin, and the museum will be buried, possibly the Nanomuseum's last show, and that will be the Nanomuseum's funeral.

But this is not to say that the museum might not bounce back to life.

The museum also reminds me of the Russian doll... the museum within the museum, each museum always hides another. Once the Nanomuseum was exhibited within the Sir John Soane Museum where Cerith Wyn Evans did a memorable piece by photographing the Nanomuseum as a museum within the museum, injecting Polaroids of the Nanomuseum which show the museum in the museum and photographed them again... like an infinite mirroring into infinity, the museum within the museum within the museum... to create some kind of imbricated dense kind of reality. Gabriel Orozco developed a whole series of computer drawings so that the reality of the Nanomuseum would change ever day. Hans-Peter Feldmann did a similar thing by showing random pictures so that the museum was never the same on any given day.

Hans Ulrich Obrist

### Postscript:

On January 1st 2010, the Nanomuseum was again reborn in Vitamin Creative Space's *the shop* in Beijing. Over the next year several solo exhibitions bounced back into a rhythm of production and circulation as the museum entered the lives of various artists, returning to the shop for exhibition. These included the duo Sun Yuan and Peng Yu, and Hu Xiangqian. For the World Portable Gallery Convention 2012 the Nanomuseum invited the shop to exhibit; they then invited the Beijing-based artist Matt Hope to create a "reading room," a versatile, multi-functional space for enhancing the perceptions of small





things, including optical devices like lens and mirrors, and a solar powered sound component reacting directly with the light. A space for reflection and an intimate environment to explore the space around us: books, objects, atmospheric changes or even our own selves.

- (1) Hans Ulrich Obrist is here referring to Robert Filliou's *Galérie Légitime*; the work of Seurat he refers to is a study for a painting by Seurat called "Les Poseuses."
- (2) "Laboratorium," co-curated by Hans Ulrich Obrist and Barbara Vanderlinden at multiple sites in Antwerp, 1999.

The Nanomuseum and Alopecia Gallery make an appearance on CTV Morning Live, Sept. 4<sup>th</sup> 2012





## **Alopecia Gallery**

Notes from a Powerpoint presentation

“Hello. My name is Gordon Isnor, I’m taking part in the convention as a representative of the Alopecia Gallery. The Alopecia Gallery is a mobile, portable art gallery that I founded somewhere around 1995 or 1996 while I was a student at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design.

## ALOPEPECIA GALLERY

A UNIQUE SPACE FOR CONTEMPORARY WORK  
NOW ACCEPTING PROPOSALS IN ALL MEDIA



### SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

EXHIBITS TEMPORARILY REMOVED FOR  
SLEEP & MISCELLANEOUS ACTIVITIES:

PRODUCE DISPOSABLE MULTIPLES  
STICKERS ARE AN EXCELLENT OPTION  
MINIMUM EDITION: 7 FOR 1 WEEK EXHIBIT

DIMENSIONS OF EXHIBITION SPACE:  
1 1/2 INCHES WIDE X 2 INCHES HIGH  
(MAY GROW OR SHRINK WITHOUT NOTICE)

### ALOPEPECIA GALLERY

2120 NEWTON AVENUE HALIFAX NS  
CANADA B3L 3B9 (902) 425-3518  
NSCAD MAILBOX : GORDON ISNOR

## A Unique Event in the History of Art & Skin

our first show **Amy Baker**

**March 14th to March 20th**

Gallery location: Varies (Gordon B. Isnor's face).

Hours: Not when I'm sleeping, please.

### Alopepecia Gallery

Alopepecia Gallery c/o 2120 Newton Avenue Halifax Nova Scotia B3L 3B9 (902) 425-3518

## PIZZA SHOW

**Sandy Plotnikoff**

**March 25th to April 1st**

Location: Variable (Gordon B. Isnor's face). Hours: From when I wake up until I go to sleep.

### Alopepecia Gallery

Alopepecia Gallery c/o 2120 Newton Avenue Halifax Nova Scotia B3L 3B9 (902) 423 6488

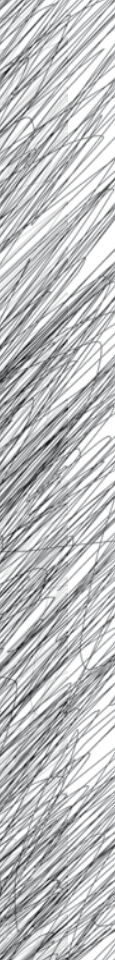
## 7 THINGS

- 1) WATCH SPORTS ON TV
- 2) JOG ACROSS TOWN
- 3) HAVE THE LOBSTER
- 4) DO WORD PROBLEMS FROM THE OLD MATH BOOK
- 5) SING LOVE SONGS TO EDGA WITH THE SUCKY GUTS
- 6) DIG UP OLD WOUNDS WITH THE COPS IN SACKVILLE NEW BRUNSWICK
- 7) VISIT THE SIKH TEMPLE AGAIN & TAKE SOME OLD GUY'S SEAT

## MICHAEL FERNANDES

ALOPEPECIA GALLERY APRIL 1 TO 7

ALOPEPECIA GALLERY IS LOCATED ON GORDON B. ISNOR'S FACE  
OPEN FROM WAKE UP TO SLEEPING TIME



The gallery takes its name from the skin condition Alopecia, which is essentially a condition of hair loss from the head or body. Male pattern baldness would be the most commonly known manifestation of Alopecia. In my case—and apart from the obvious male pattern baldness to which you are now privy—I was as a high school age youth diagnosed with alopecia on the face. After a number of cortisone-fuelled weeks, the condition went into regression. My facial alopecia flared up again while I was a student at NSCAD, and at this point I designed to open an art gallery in the spot—in a convoluted attempt to turn what might otherwise be an embarrassing condition into a curiosity for the delight of my NSCAD compatriots.

I don't recall the debut show at the Alopecia Gallery, but I can with certainty list of some of the artist that took part around that time, namely: Sandy Plotnikoff, Amy Baker, Michael Fernandes, and Darrin Heaton all showed work around 1995–1996.

Sandy, an inveterate art prankster, produced work that was my personal all time favourite for the gallery, and was perhaps the most intelligent use of the space from a site-specific standpoint.

Called *Pizza Show*, Sandy charged me with applying seven packets of Land o Lakes butter, one per day, to my alopecia spot, in an attempt to produce acne. I can't honestly remember if it worked or not, but the idea was compelling.



NSCAD instructor Michael Fernandes produced the most abstract work that the gallery has yet seen. His instructions were simply, “7 Things You Would Not Do.” The loose parameters gave way to a perhaps even looser interpretation of the work; a poster ensued, detailing, perhaps, seven things that my face would not be partaking of during the course of the week.

A summer spent in Massachusetts led to a trip to New York City, where a highly observant herbalist in Chinatown produced, in a matter of seconds, exactly the medication needed to send my Alopecia running for cover. Western medicine, be damned! The medication in question: Refined Bantuling; the Alopecia Gallery went into a state of neglect as a result.

My Alopecia flared up now and again in subsequent years, but, to some extent, I stopped paying it any notice.

Somewhere around 2005, I believe, I was contacted by Hannah Jickling about a portable gallery project she was working on in conjunction with Or Gallery. She'd





heard rumours of the Alopecia Gallery during her time at NSCAD and asked me if I was interested in taking part.

With a clever piece by Toronto artist Paige Gratland—a beard extension known as the Sontag—the Alopecia Gallery came springing back to life for a brief time. There followed a subsequent show by another good Torontonian, Julia Baird, and then the Alopecia Gallery went back into hiding.

The gallery remained dormant again until the summer of 2011, when Michael McCormack of the Eye-level Gallery was fomenting plans for World Portable Gallery Convention 2012. Michael had heard about the Alopecia Gallery and asked if I would take part in the festivities. With something of a budget beyond my own pocket change for the first time in its history, I deigned to contact some friends who'd gone on to action-packed art careers, hoping that they might take part.

Syracuse-based artists Duke & Battersby agreed to take part, producing an audio piece that would effectively turn my face into an Alopecia Sound System, albeit a very small, sombre, arhythmic and very nearly inaudible one.

In terms of the World Portable Gallery Convention 2012, I imagine that the Alopecia Gallery may be unique at least in terms of it being perhaps, the most obtrusive, and impractical gallery taking part?

Procuring work small enough for the space is a first issue.

Procuring work smart enough for the unusual nature of the space is another.

Mounting the work can be difficult and a potential source of ridicule or embarrassment depending upon the context.

The works durability and ability to stay mounted is another consideration.

Being a reclusive, reticent person, exhibitions raise questions: when, where and for how long will I exhibit the work? I tend toward favouring the cognoscenti: the insular, internal world of galleries and designated spaces; where one may be equally likely to be sniggered at, but hopefully behind one's back for the sake of propriety.

Questions are raised:

What is the role of the artist and artwork as it relates to the Alopecia Gallery. Is the gallery merely a gimmick, a novelty, a whimsical idea that provides a few yuks for those who hear of it or chance to see it in action?

Can an artist produce a serious, dignified work for the Alopecia Gallery? Sandy Plotnikoff, I think, did answer that question effectively with his Pizza Show, turning any inherent gimmickry on its end. With each piece and artist exhibited, this question is raised anew.

For a peculiar gallery such as this, one component of the project—from my perspective—is the dialogues that arise while the work is being exhibited and in conversations with those who have heard tell of the gallery through friends, educators and so on. It can provide for interesting talk and a springboard for further ideas.

In the process of curating Duke & Battersby into the space, I chanced upon other artist ideas for some possible future shows, so the gallery may just have some life in it yet.

This particular exhibition is going to the most mobile yet for the Alopecia Gallery, and perhaps for the convention at least in terms of the swatch of Canadian soil covered over the course of the exhibition: during the month of September I'll be travelling to Ottawa, Toronto and Montreal, and so viewings may be possible in those cities by appointment or by chance; we are planning some possible aktions for the gallery, which will be tweeted or otherwise made publicly known.

I hope you all enjoy the art and the galleries taking part in the World Portable Gallery Convention 2012, and that they may serve as inspiration for your own galleries or projects.”

As told during the panel “Expose Your Self,”  
September 6<sup>th</sup> 2012 at the Seahorse Tavern.



# Postcards from Montréal

## WPGC 2012 at WWTWO

On September 24<sup>th</sup> 2012 WPGC 2012 hitched a ride to Montreal and appeared for an opening and closing night all in one. Outside of the white cube but inside the WWTWO Gallery (the living quarters of Danielle St. Amour and Willie Brisco which the duo transform and operate as a gallery on a regular basis). Portable Galleries included within the WPGC MTL satellite-showcase:

Alopecia Gallery, The Museum of Mental Objects, Gallery Deluxe Gallery, food by Feral Trade Café, as well as presentations from Jacob Wren, Francesca Tallone, Gordon B. Isnor and Elizabeth Johnson.



### WPGC 2012 Scene and Heard

Clockwise from top:

A listener gets intimate with Alopecia Gallery's Gordon B. Isnor; Gallery Deluxe Gallery's Francesca Tallone livin' large in WWTWO; the fantastic crowd at WWTWO; WPGC 2012's Liz Johnson expanding on why small is big in 2012.



# Ongoing Acts of Heroism

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packages and documents .....	\$5 - \$8, \$12 supper-rush
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grocery pick-up .....	\$5 for first item, 50 cents per additional item
cigarettes pick-up .....	\$5 for first pack, additional dollar per pack
condoms (after hours).....	two for \$8, add a fresh picked flower or winter berry \$1
escorting females .....	\$5 for bicycle monk to safely walk you home, \$1 for flower
flat tire repair (CAA style).....	\$15 for tube and repair
telegrams, love notes, party invitations .....	\$5
sit in your establishment (to enhance hipness) .....	\$25/hour
nude cycling monk for artistic purposes .....	\$25/hour
cleaning and bandaging small surface wounds .....	\$5
sage burning to ward off evil spirits .....	\$5
recorded message from you to a loved one .....	\$5 (video, audio)
on sight wild mushroom identification .....	\$5 delivery
settling of arguments between loved ones (the King Solomon) .....	\$5
longevity noodle (see video on Facebook) .....	\$5 + \$5 delivery
newfoundland tack delivery ( <a href="http://www.newfoundlandtack.com">www.newfoundlandtack.com</a> ) .....	\$5
e-flux journal delivery ( <a href="http://www.e-flux.com">www.e-flux.com</a> ) .....	\$5
delivery to a secret place .....	\$5, with possible adventure \$15)
natasha bedingfield's unwritten + beer .....	\$5 + cost of beer
the sacred library of the night (bound manifesto) .....	\$5

We are a facilitating service. We hope that together, the **trained cycling monk** and the **individual** that has ordered the service, will create new and exciting moments or happenings together. We aim to create collaborative semi-useful oddness as a way of ritualizing daily existence. We wish to create beautiful moments in time and a blending of service and art. We would like to create beautiful infrastructure.

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“I want to collaborate and do elaborate deliveries of not so conventional physical and non-physical matter. I want to deliver ideas and sentiment. I want to save at least one person in a jam (maybe they’ll be out of jam and need some delivered). I want to destroy alienation. No biggie.”

# TWIG AND THREAD

The necklace is frail so that it might break  
This may happen in a few days  
This may happen in a week  
Or weeks

You probably won't notice it happen  
You will look down eventually and realize it is gone  
This is to be taken symbolically

Pause and look around

"A revelation leaps over the borders of the everyday. A life without revelation is no life at all. What you need to do is move from reason that observes to reason that acts. That's what's critical."

*from a book, who cares which one god dammit!*



“Also, I’m presenting a new service in which I attack the one who has ordered the service in a god mask (kind of like an African Tribal Mask) which the orderer will have feared for a week in preparation. This god mask will represent the cultural gods (institutions) and taboos that have held the person in a constant state of self-produced purgatory. I will slightly harm the person but ultimately let them win and remove my mask representing the malleability and impermanence of law and order and for this they shall be emancipated.”

# NEWFOUNDLAND TACK

It is often the case when going through any sort of creative process, be it artistic or mind-developing, that movement is required. The tack is created as an energy source to carry on this process.

---

Hard Tack is crafted as an energy source to sustain movement of the mind and body. Each unit is a storehouse for transportable, biological energy; designed not to perish, withstanding any bumps in the road. It is made by the maker with intent to travel thus preparing the mind for the journey, as much as the body.

For someone whom has ordered the tack, intent to travel should also be inherent. You have made a conscious decision to feed yourself on your journey with this biscuit. This way, a banal seafaring nutritional staple has become a magical tool for adventure.

You will be moving through time and space; as you usually do. To do this you needn't even try. However, when moving through time with TACK, you may be free to make your mind move in a way that is interesting.

Hard Tack assists the mind in opening to the possibility of adventure; physically, as in the journey through time and space; and mentally, as in the journey towards an idea or outcome. You shall not worry about nourishment on your journey.

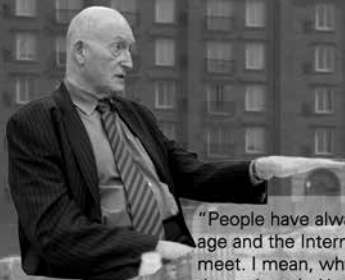
The Tack frees your body and your mind. It is therefore truly beautiful.



“I don’t know anything about the convention centre because I am not from here, however I do know that there will always be an imposed structure that we will be born into if we are born into society and this is not a bad thing because that structure is usually more often than not built out of good will and a belief that it will help. The important thing though is that we don’t take this structure that we were born into as absolute truth and that we make it malleable. For instance, in nature a river exists as a structure. It flows one direction. It has all these purposes such as irrigation, fish housing, etc. But if you put a turbine on it, you can make power.”

# Convention Central

On September 7<sup>th</sup>, 2012, WPGC 2012 hosted a roundtable at the Halifax North Branch Library consisting of Fred Connors (entrepreneur and 2012 mayoral candidate), Emily Davidson (artist and member of Roberts Street Social Centre), Howard Epstein (MLA Halifax Chebucto) and Bernard Smith (North End Business Development Council).



"People have always needed to meet. Despite the electronics age and the Internet and all that, I think we still do need to meet. I mean, why is the U.S. President making his speech down there in North Carolina at 11 o'clock at night and telling us what a great guy he is? Why do people spend money to go to that convention down there? There is something therapeutic about people coming together." – Bernard Smith




"I think as a community we need a centre that celebrates social, creative, technical and community innovation. We need shared space, we need enlightened space, we need activated space where we can grow the next generation of creative entrepreneurs and leaders. Currently they don't feel they have a place in our city. And so I think it's great to have big meeting spaces, and everyone is looking for this iconic emblem of progress downtown, and many people feel that is going to come in the form of the Nova Centre." – Fred Connors

To hear more:

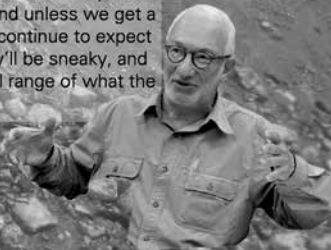
<http://eyelevelgallery.ca/convention-central-recording.mp3>



Issues related to the Nova Centre were discussed, including its design and consultation process, the corruption or ineptitude of city council, and what the city needs to build stronger communities.

A woman with short hair, wearing a patterned top, is speaking and gesturing with her hands. She is positioned on the right side of the image, with a speech bubble containing text overlaid on the left. The background shows a construction site with a concrete wall and a building in the distance.

“Things that I think would change this city for the better would be rent control—we need that back, I am so mad that it left; I think there should be penalties for developers for having spaces that aren’t occupied; in terms of commercial spaces, I think that there is a falsely inflated high price for commercial renting in this city, and that it hasn’t dropped down to a fairer market value; and I think there should be more gathering spaces spread throughout HRM as opposed to a central gathering place.”  
– Emily Davidson

A man with glasses, wearing a light-colored button-down shirt, is speaking and gesturing with his hands. He is positioned in the lower right corner of the image, with a speech bubble containing text overlaid on the left. The background is a construction site with a large pile of rubble and a concrete wall.

“City Council inserted permission for a convention centre on their own, at the last minute. What this illustrates is that City Council is sneaky, and they have no serious respect for the process of public consultation. And unless we get a different council, everyone in HRM can continue to expect that’s what we’ll get from Council—they’ll be sneaky, and they won’t really be interested in the full range of what the public has to say.” – Howard Epstein

# PUBLIC CONSULTATION



"What is your ideal convention centre?"



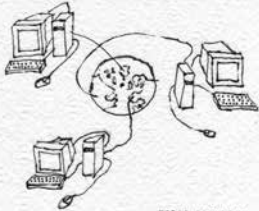
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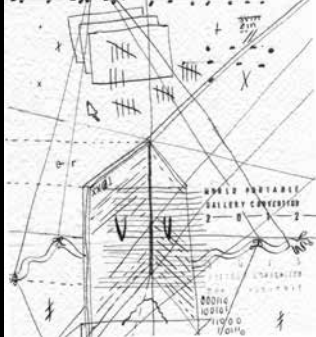
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## **Radical Napkin Theology (minutes from a world portable gallery convention)**

by Michael Eddy

### Morning Thoughts

“The question of action comes down to a question of love—and of whether to act and of how to act —> we manifest what we love. We believe in what we love and therefore we believe in ourselves, in the act. We know this feeling, this love, as our own, even though its very purpose and provenance is in its sharing. There are different loves, to be sure, but each one is like the axel

of a wheel and each one of us is like the spoke on that wheel, that thin and singular conveyance meant only for us, even if we ourselves can be linked to several loves, to several wheels, all in rotation, in acting, and moving this way and that in an undersea of wheels rising and falling, our wheels carrying us on the traffic of a tempest of loves, loves obscuring other loves, moment by moment, by their unceasing crossings and coincidental alignments. Can we only be fixed onto that love, and be driven on its carriage, to unknown positions, out of control and spiraling in our indentured roles as props to a love that may not even, in that last instance, in the final, compromised, but best-we-can-do glimpse into some flash of distance, love us back? No, this is based on an outmoded maths, on some kind of fixed relativity, a propriety of protestant proportions, where we are all allowed our positions, but no more nor less than any other.  
(...)”

## Coffee Break

Standing next to the tea table, a gallerist and one of the convention planners discussed the intricacies of dealing with tax laws regarding each of their professions.

The convention planner likened her job to a DJ who controlled all the elements of an event, and more importantly the degrees of each element. If balanced well, then all those concerned, whether entrepreneurs and

stakeholders, service staff, auditors or the general public who might be aware of the event, would be more likely to agree that “this was a legitimate rave.”

This, she said, holding up 3 slender fingers, was important because the legitimacy of a convention as a tax deductible event rests on the following provisions, in the language of the Canadian Revenue Agency (CRA):

- Held by a business or professional organization.
- Connected to the taxpayer’s business.
- Held at a location consistent with the territorial scope of the sponsoring organization.

These sound fairly straightforward, she admitted, but they depended variously on the publicity around the event, the content’s relevance to the overall theme, the suitability (or appearance as such) of the venue, and most importantly the real human contacts made during the event—in short, on various factual interpretations of the three provisions.

But don’t we all know what a good convention, er, rave, is? wryly interjected a fresh participant in the informal chat. I mean, are you suggesting it’s like the blind men and the elephant?

In a way, yes. But not because we can or want to find out the truth of the event, but because we want to advance a particular interpretation of it. Our motives are multiple. I recognize as a planner that many people just want to work in a subsidized vacation as part of their business trip—think about it, this extra something is the

very reason why governments and entrepreneurs push so hard for building these facilities in the first place; not just for the catering companies, but for the souvenir shop too. But let's get real, the CRA would never agree to deduct expenses from a convention held on a trans-oceanic cruise ship. Why not? Because it doesn't conform to the accepted definitions of "territorial scope"—the ocean, without business, is the boardroom of only the super elites who don't pay taxes anyway. So, can't we find a way to position your desire for a convention on the high seas so that it can be counted as a legitimate business expense?

Everybody knows that the government just doesn't understand business today, the interlocutor said aside. So we build a convention center that is a ship, and register it with a port address.

Bingo.

The group nodded with approval.

Some rules are not about interpretation, inserted the gallerist. You can't just talk around them, adjust them with rhetorical loopholes, and still count as legitimate. You need to resort to transgression and clandestine tactics. For example borders. You're either on one side or the other.

The small gathering looked puzzled, but amused.

I'll give you a couple quick examples. The artist Daniel Spoerri once talked about an experience he had in June of 1961, on his way to an exhibition in Cologne and crossing the Franco-German border with a suitcase




containing works by artists like Jean Tinguely, Niki de Saint-Phalle, Raymond Hains, and others. It was fitted with a padlock by Robert Rauschenberg—these names mean anything to you?

The mixed crowd offered expressions that suggested uncertainty about their uncertainty.

Well, anyhow, at the border Spoerri had to lie to the customs officers, convincing them he was an illusionist whose gig would be ruined if they insisted on breaking the padlock and opening up his suitcase. It's interesting because it's hard to know from the anecdote whether the guards would have even picked up on the possibility that this was an exhibition in a suitcase rather than just a random assortment of stuff and objected on those grounds. So perhaps it was more out of concern for security than for trafficking of untaxed artworks.

1961, you say? said a young man shuffling through his iPhone, that is, after all, a year of several terrorist incidents, including the first U.S. plane hijacking, the Berlin Crisis and construction of the Wall, and a massacre of North African protesters in Paris.

The gallerist took the interruption in stride, continuing, and his friend, Robert Filliou, had the following year proposed to a group of friends to found a commercial art gallery called Galérie Légitime on a wheelbarrow that he would haul around the streets of Paris, and then internationally. But he dropped the format when his application for a business license was rejected. He decided to put the gallery inside his hat, and thus, in the words



of Spoerri, “The Legitimate Gallery turned out to be an illegitimate gallery.” The gallerist then lowered his voice, and then there are the secret overland routes out of Basel, Switzerland, if you know what I am saying...

The young man with the iPhone paused—nobody present could discern what was being referred to.

Look, say you want to get out of Switzerland without paying taxes on your sale at the Basel Art Fair—the safest way to do that is to deal in hard currency on-site, right? Well, how are you going to bring suitcases of cash, or disassembled installations through all those X-ray machines and interrogations? Not through the airport, that’s for sure. There are some storied roads you can take through the Alps with a trunkful, without once meeting a single surly customs officer. And I must say the views are also well worth the drive...

## World Bistro Session 1

“Okay, so here it is, number 4: What are the ultimate goals of any enterprise starting up in today’s metropolis?”

“Well, that’s clear, in our field it is success and sustainability.”

“Okay, so to play the devil’s advocate, say we recognize a certain self-destructiveness in-built in our field, are those goals then not contradictory?”

“I am not sure I totally follow: the self-destructiveness of what?”

ism.”

“Well, since our field isn’t completely commensurate with crisis-capitalism, I would say it isn’t a perfect contradiction. Think about an enterprise in which stakeholders measure their success by the degree of self-sufficiency they are afforded within the field, theoretically this would be a way to allow participation in the field without paying lip service to the same oppressive conditions that dominate crisis-capitalism.”

“Ah, so what you are talking about is autonomy? I’ll write that down.”

“Yeah, autonomy, and ideally one could reach a level where the field and the enterprise are basically totally unwedded. But this is not just a matter of buying a few solar panels and growing your arugula in rooftop container farms, right?”

“But hold on, if you are going to eat arugula, it has to come from someplace—are you suggesting limiting diet to whatever can be grown self-sufficiently? Our field would be totally transformed if that was the demand. Does that go for coffee too? We’d have to move headquarters to the tropics to sustain productivity.”

“Yes, and think about your laptop, your clothes and the Internet. And even one’s desire for mobility—these all belong to someone else, someone not quite oneself.”

“But is that really what autonomy means, making everything by yourself? Doesn’t it have more to do

with dictating one's own laws, which could very well line up with the current laws at several points, as long as it was issued from the self? And how do you expect to empower this self if you take away all these tools and structures that the modern world has produced, isn't that a bit like shooting your self in the foot? It sounds a bit idealistic to me."

"No no no, what I am saying is that we need to expropriate these tools for use in undermining the oppressive regimes of crisis-capitalism and the police state. The idealism lies in thinking that these regimes will allow change from within, that producing alternatives will affect anything. No, the entire system has to be taken down, and I mean literally, with force."

"Wait a second, but where does that leave our field?"

"It leaves our field in a non-hypocritical position; indeed, in a very empowered position, pursuing the only viable ultimate goal of the destruction of states and the production of a federation of anarchist communes. No more whining."

"But there it is again: idealism. Because in proposing this goal, you are simultaneously advocating any physical means necessary (including violence) while delaying any glimpse of success to what you have to admit is a very unlikely future. I don't think we can afford such fundamentalism. Yes, we should forego aspiring to make changes through the State, but we should rather acknowledge and claim as real existing small pockets of autonomy,

however fleeting. We are not losers waiting for a revolution.”

“Not revolution, but insurrection. Actually, I think we agree on that point. I’ll write that down.”

“But even within insurrection, I think that engaging in guerrilla warfare will only attract the State’s wrath and will set one up as a martyr in permanently antagonistic terms, hindering one’s possibilities for the realizations of temporary autonomous zones. We have to be able to come and go as necessary, consummating, dissolving and forming somewhere else, dropping out, striking and running away...”

“Now it’s clear we agree.”

“Maybe, but when I say strike, when I say temporary autonomous zone, I don’t want to give the impression that ultimately what I am talking about is throwing bricks at cops, yeah?”

“Hmm.”

“I want the enterprises in our field to be counted, after all, that’s the content of the question here.”

“So, you want to claim that you and I, this conversation, and maybe this entire convention should be potentially counted as autonomous spaces?”

“Why not, we are talking quite freely, who knows what its effects could be.”

“That’s rubbish. I am not writing that down.”

“Oh, look at that, time is up. Thanks, let’s talk after, okay?”

“Yeah, great. Do you know where table 11 is?”

“By the fountain.”  
“Thanks.”

## Lunch Opportunity

Streaming out of the conference hall, the mass of congregants gradually maneuvered in chatty and turbulent disarray up a broad staircase flanked on one side by a huge glass wall. On the other side of this wall stretched a vast saltwater aquarium that spanned between separate halls and rose three stories. A plethora of sea life teemed around a central towering reef and along the perimeters. Schools of small silver fish flitted about together like a single indecisive kite in a storm, innumerable polyps and medusas flared and contracted in hypnotic rhythms, eels and octopuses slipped around outcroppings and holes, and a few large sharks circulated insatiably.

Sometimes the convention centre allowed field trips of public school kids to sit on the scrubbed carpets and conduct classes on marine life and what it must feel like to be a fish. But engrossed in their intercourse, most convention participants paid this magnificent animal kingdom little mind, or occasionally stepped out of the mob to snap a self-portrait. For them, there was no time to gaze purposelessly at the microcosmic dramas unfolding in the tank. This lack of time, however, did not mean they didn't absorb the parallels inherent in these mortal and unstable straits. The duller of the bunch might exhibit the

tendency to time his or her self-portrait exactly when the sharks passed by: I am a shark, I am the king of the ocean, I eat smaller fish, and am unstoppable. But everyone was inevitably in the tank. And the less they reflected this, the more at home they were in it—which is to say, the more at home they were in their homelessness.

Lunch is labour—all good delegates recognized this. They had their napkins ready, their elevator pitches prepared, and were even set to forego food. Networking can be the ticket to the next meal, a pragmatic truism that became impossibly convoluted when practiced on the buffet line. But returning to the aquarium, we could ask, wasn't this the kind of labour that divided humans from animals, the architect from the bee, the bureaucrat from the flounder? After all, it was true the opportunist making a proposal over a tray of wine-poached salmon paid close attention to the patterns and aesthetic semiology of the etiquette governing interactions. This certainly seemed the most civilized way to conduct a meeting, in an ambiance of pleasure and satiation, values shared by nearly all of humanity.

However, another commonality (between nations, between species) underlay this easygoing coming-together: fear. For all its gregariousness, the convention centre's layout, decor and lack of ordinary and distinguishing comforts inside only emphasized the extraneousness the opportunist felt as fact outside of the glass box. Granted, people were not fish. But today's human being, through its conquests and rationalization, had not succeeded in making

the world an easier place to live. Without a natural order to oppose, without authentic communities to ground it, and without even the ethics that a world of organized labour once held in place, the human was divested of any trace of a habitat, as its environment fragmented into a constellation of possibilities. The rules—of nature, of markets, of spontaneous camaraderie—became the vehicle for mere opportunities, to subvert, to innovate and manipulate. Human existence, via abstraction, paradoxically took on the characteristics of the animal, thrown into its environment without any moral solidarity. Carried on the back of a vulnerability so existentially profound as to go unnoticed as the loach, the active appearance of this situation was the perspective that anything was possible. As such it didn't quite matter whether we were talking about the particular version of snakes and ladders of any single extremely specialized field, or opportunity as an abstract idea.

The human's "historico-natural" capacities configured their "general intellect," comprising the epistemic models that structure social communication. The faculty to react and adapt to the abstract opportunities reticulating away in all directions, and to foresee their para-causal interrelations, was a human faculty. And once this layer of intellectual activity had risen from the depths to the very churning surface of the mundane, it became the faculty of production. General intellect was what endowed each of the convention-goers with their means of production. Convening a convention historically furnished conven-



tions—agreements, standards—but now we mustered to fuel speculations. Despite its appearances, its card-for-card exchanges and ostensible aspirations to intersubjectivity, the networking that took place in the cafeteria lounge made no claims to equality. Some would make it big, the floor might fall out from underneath others.

And so we didn't eat, we searched. We searched as we ate. Were we at the right table? Our eyes bulging, glassy.

## Afternoon Workshop: How to be an Institution


“So, I was thinking about what to say here today, seeing as how you are such a diverse audience. And then I was thinking, better just start from my own experience, because that's what this is about, right? Sharing our experiences? And so I wanted to talk about how to make your own institution, because it's something most people think is this really daunting thing that they could never do, and this is something I have done a couple of times. Don't worry. It doesn't have to be that hard.

First lesson: Appearances are important. You say you are one thing but you are actually another. For instance, you exaggerate about your size and importance. What's so hard about that? We do it all the time, we do that every day. We do that in the grocery store, we do that when we meet our friends on the street. So what's so hard about doing it for your institution? You can be a

one-person institution but presenting yourself as a large international thing. Good ways to help out your appearance: Make a name. Make titles. Make namecards. Make letterhead. Make a website. Maybe you work yourself up to getting an office. Maybe you start wearing different kinds of clothing, uniforms, ties. Maybe you get testimonials from folks. They could even be real testimonials. Ha ha. Take it as it comes, and go at your own pace.

Okay so another thing is, there are so many types of institutions, this is true, and this is something we should consider from the beginning. I will list just a few of these different types: A business. A museum. A corporation. A school. A gallery. An organization. A tradition. Some of these sound really hard to make, yes, but we can start with baby steps. For instance, one option I have found quite useful is to cross the genres. Many people don't think of that. What I mean is that you could, say, open what looked like a store but it was actually a library, for example. You could be a right wing lobbying group and call yourself a charitable social interest foundation. Ha ha. It's true though. You could even register as a business but work like a non-profit—both are institutions, just different types. The significant difference is that it's sometimes easier to make a business. Lesson two: Use differences to your advantage. This is one way to start your institution. You are the boss.

So, you see, basically you have to build up your appearance. You might call it your brand. Now the choice of brands can be tricky, as that's really the face of your in-



stitution. And so the next question is, who are you talking to? Who is your institution talking to, who is inside of it? Who do you want inside of it? This can get really personal, and it comes down to your own decisions and tastes and what you hope to accomplish. Maybe if you start certain types of institutions there might be certain types of expectations. These can actually help you to make your plan. Your institution can either join a group of existing institutions and expectations or you can kind of twist those and fill a niche. Like how about a university for chickens. Ha ha. Huh? Oh they have one of those? Well, there's always room for another chicken university. Ha ha. Fonts, designs, logos, colours, all of these elements are important, don't underestimate them. They make your institution more believable, and not only as an institution, but as a good and respectable institution. But again, don't get too obsessed with them, as maybe with a really hip and flamboyant or professional appearance you will turn off certain groups who you actually want to be talking to, who you want inside your institution. I mean, this is inevitable. For instance, if you start an institution that has basically a blank face or an unclear face, maybe you will puzzle some folks. Maybe that's what you want. But even that kind of, what we could call, "neutral" appearance will be off-putting to some people. Lesson three: You can't be everyone's institution.

So one tip: Start small. Be professional but not too ambitious at first. Professionalism is something that is unavoidable. This means different things in different

contexts. It could mean being thorough with roles and appearances. If you sign your letters “Treasurer” but then you switch that up one day without any reason, or spell it wrong, these are details that affect people. It is harder to believe an institution that can’t get the details right. Especially a small one. Like for instance say your institution is only a diary shared by friends: if someone doesn’t assume their role in the rotating leadership of this institution, i.e. they don’t write their entry at the agreed upon time, then that institution just kind of falls apart. It is easier to pay attention to small scales, but we still have to be thorough. I want to say one thing about rules: Rules exist not because we are by nature fascist multinational corporations, but because they make explicit what exists beyond the individual. Institutions need rules, they must have principles or protocols, something we can hypothetically share and develop together in common... Although I see some of you in the audience are fascist multinational corporations. Ha ha.

Okay, you ask, but still, why do people follow the rules that institutions make? Are we all just robots? Is someone just telling me what to say here? I sure hope not. Basically what holds your institution together is belief. This is related to something we already covered, which is appearance. But it is more than that. I guess it’s what you might call the social contract or something. Because hey, you are not only a butterfly mimicking an owl, are you? No, you may be a butterfly, but you have your own functions! Lesson four: Institutions are positive! They have


attributes of productivity, function, agreement. We also each judge them according to our own capacity as an individual for agreement, according to their reasonableness. People aren't stupid. But they can help your institution.

And how? I will tell you. Through rituals. Lesson five: Rituals are important. Rituals re-inaugurate your institution, in the face of oblivion and chaos, again and again. They can be modest or lavish: Saying your prayers, gathering at special moments, displays of excessive expenditure or conspicuous consumption, meetings and audiences, of one or a hundred... Each institution has to find its own way, its own mantra.

How many of you think you can get rid of institutions? Can we get rid of them? I see a couple hands up there. There's probably a few libertarians out there, am I right? Well, let me tell you the answer: You can't get rid of institutions. If you claim you can, it's just because your definition of institution is extremely limited. You are probably only counting banks and opera houses. But your own family is an institution. And so the question isn't should we or should we not have institutions, but what kind of institutions should we have? This is not about looking around the kitchen, finding what kind of ingredients you have and then making an institution sandwich. This is the sandwich making itself. Do you know what I am saying? Or how about many little buns and mini pickles and stuff, all coming together on the plate. Having food fights. Can you picture it? So, let's not mince words. Lesson six: Get ready for criticism!"

## Dinner Break

After the day's presentations finished, the crowd milled around at a pop-up bar that had been rolled in among a stand of tall round tables wrapped in stretchy black polyester. Faint music encouraged friendly repartee. The neighboring buildings glinted with the sun's pinkish blessings. A dinner buffet was being laid out on the mezzanine, so all the participants in the convention loosened up with identical alcoholic beverages and appetizers. A couple of young men, having swiftly knocked back several rounds, started walking across the carpet toward an empty corner of the room, leaving the hubbub. They waved and shook hands with several of their colleagues on the way. Reaching the glass wall, they opened one of the emergency exits and left the convention centre. The alarm caused some consternation among the centre staff, but the crowd had already gotten quite gleeful by that time and didn't notice much, differences and defenses were dropping, personalities emerging. A young security guard grabbing the door handle lingered to watch the men. Their gaits shifted slightly, bobbing, cooling off, as they tossed their jackets over their shoulders, giggling and glancing back. They walked down the sidewalk and crossed the street toward the overpass, where there was a group camped out underneath. As the two participants sat down and accepted bottles in brown bags, the security guard, closing the door, could faintly make out their riotous laughter carried on the gentle September evening breeze.



This text contains elements of:  
*The Coming Insurrection* by the Invisible Committee  
*Temporary Autonomous Zone* by Hakim Bey  
*Toward a Phenomenology of Opportunism* by Massimo de Carolis  
*The Ambivalence of Disenchantment* by Paolo Virno  
*An Anecdoted Topography of Chance* by Daniel Spoerri

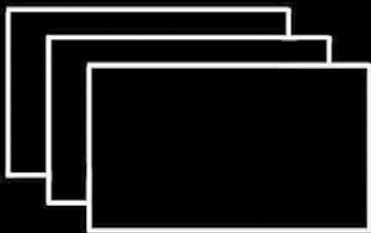


## **P.R. Rankin Gallery**

*Established 2012*



*World Portable*



**GALLERY CONVENTION**

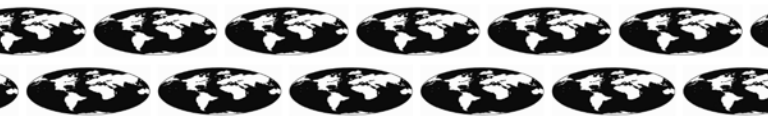
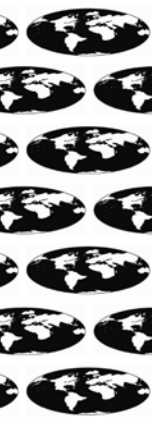
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September 1<sup>st</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup>, 2012

Eyelevel Gallery

Halifax, Nova Scotia

Co-organized by Michael Eddy and Eyelevel Gallery

# EYELEVEL GALLERY

Eyelevel Gallery Director: Michael McCormack

WPGC 2012 coordinator: Elizabeth Johnson

Book editor and designer: Michael Eddy

Co-editor: Michael McCormack

Graphic Design contributor: Elizabeth Johnson

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WPGC 2012 photography: Matthew Carswell, Michael Eddy, Michael McCormack, Daniel Dugas (MediaPackboard); archival images courtesy their galleries

Enormous respect and gratitude go to all the WPGC 2012 mini contributors

Special thanks go to:

Emma Ridgway and Leanne Dmyterko for their facilitation of Gustav Metzger's participation; Max Andrews and Mariana Canepa Luna of Latitudes for their support; Melanie Bono of Muenster Sculpture Project; Robert Knowles; Jon Knowles; Vincent Bonin; the Feral Trade couriers: Huang Jingyuan, Eleanor King, Vahida Ramujkic, Paul Hammond, Liz Johnson, Michael Eddy, Nathan Doucet; Norris Eddy, for his development of Eyelevel Bread; the MoMOS: Aaron McConomy, Jean-Marc Perin, Joanna Lai, Stephanie Yee, Merray Gerges, Matthew England, Kate Stinson, Corey Isnor, Daniel Higham, Karen Hawes, Melissa Blanch, Bakes Mitchell, Natasha Kryzyzewski; Eyelevel's world-class volunteers: Karen Hawes, Katherine, Matthew Carswell, Natalie Boderman, Becky Welter-Nolan; Danielle St. Amour and Willie Brisco of WWTwo; The International wristwatch contributors: Norris Eddy, Liz Johnson, Dan Scott, Dan Boyce, Scott McCormack; The "Convention Central" roundtable superstars: Fred Connors, Emily Davidson, Howard Epstein, Bernard Smith; Halifax North Memorial Public Library; The Seahorse Tavern; Roberts Street Social Centre; Hu Fang, Luisa Tresca and Lu Jia of Vitamin Creative Space/the shop; Felipe Escudero; Fotini Lazaridou-Hatzigoga; Lao Yang; HomeShop; Linda Kreger; Yolanda Karton-Burns and Ruby Lev McCormack; Emi and Lowell Eddy Uemura; Beau Labute and Dorota Forfa for Ms. Jickling's swanky digs; Eyelevelers Softball Team, Khyber Klubbers Softball Team, SUNSCAD

**HALIFAX**  
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CANADIENS

ISBN: 978-0-9682601-5-9

161 GALLON GALLERY

-- Dan Joyce + Miriam Moren, CA --  
Showing: Lukas Pearse

ALOPECIA GALLERY

-- Gordon B. Isnor, CA --  
Showing: Duke + Battersby

COAT OF CHARMS

-- Hannah Jickling, CA --  
Showing: F\* Mtn

EYELEVEL MEMBER'S GALLERY

-- Fixed Cog Hero, CA --

FERAL TRADE CAFE

-- Feral Trade / Kate Rich, UK --

GALLERY DELUXE GALLERY

-- Paul Hammond + Francesca Tallone, CA --  
Showing: Chris Foster

MEDIAPACKBOARD

-- Valerie LeBlanc + Daniel Dugas, CA --

MUSEUM OF MENTAL OBJECTS (MoMO)

-- Judy Freya Q. Sibayan, PH --

NANOMUSEUM

-- Hans Ulrich Obrist, CH --  
Showing: the shop (Vitamin Creative  
Space) presented by Matt Hope

NASUBI GALLERY

-- Ozawa Tsuyoshi, JP --  
Showing: Ken Lum

P.R. RANKIN GALLERY

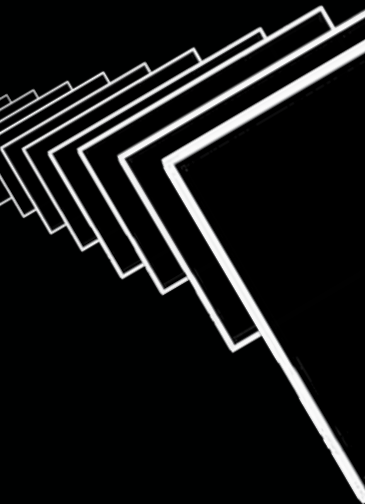
-- E. P. Johnson + M. D. McCormack, CA --

Reduce Art Flights (RAF)

-- Gustav Metzger, UK --

VELCRO GALLERY

-- Craig Leonard + Beck Osborne, CA --  
Showing: Open Submission Exhibition





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IDEAS

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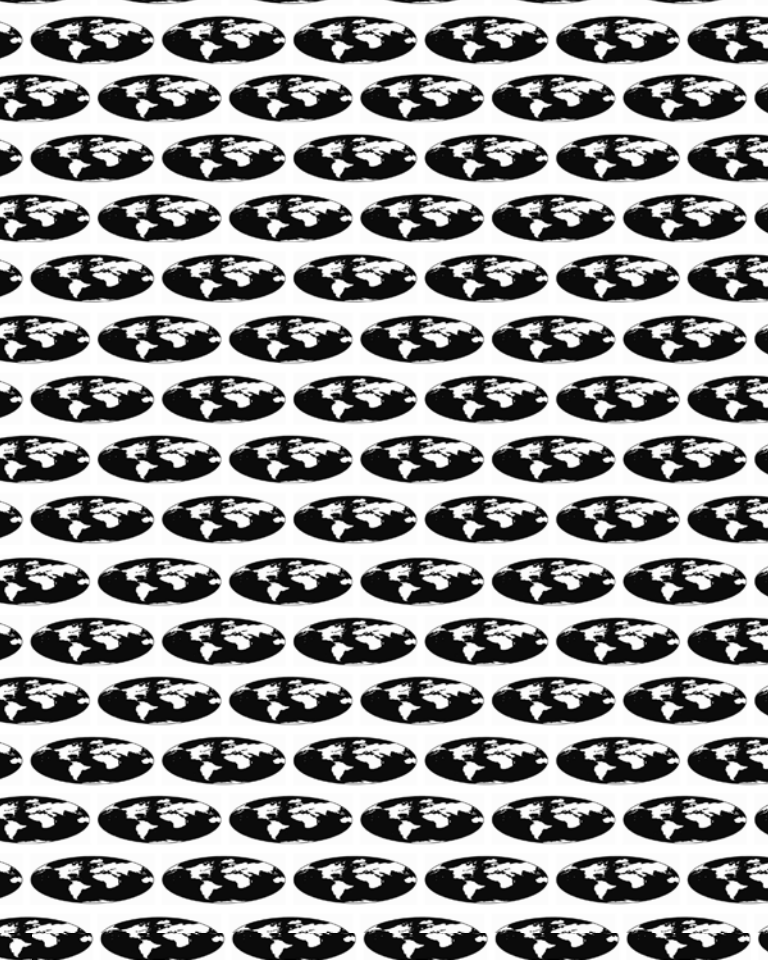
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WPGC 2012// September 1-29  
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ISBN 978-0-9682601-5-9



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