Introduction: As if from nowhere… artists' thoughts about research-creation

Risa Horowitz, guest-editor / rédactrice invitée

Résumé

Cette section inaugurale de *Pratiques* met en valeur, du point de vue de la pratique et de la recherche-création, la réflexion des artistes quant à leurs processus de travail et leurs œuvres. S'il est clair que les artistes travaillant dans les universités font face à des défis particuliers, liés aux demandes croissantes de la part des institutions universitaires d'articuler leurs cadres méthodologiques et l'application de ceux-ci dans leur travail, ils jouissent également de la possibilité d'approcher, de partager et de présenter d'innombrables manières le fruit de leurs investigations créatives réalisées dans le contexte de la recherche-création. Les contributeurs à cette section – Marlene MacCallum, David Morrish, Christof Migone, Donna Szoke, Barbara Meneley et Risa Horowitz – s'expriment ici sur leurs recherches et sur les approches méthodologiques qu'ils privilégient. Ils révèlent et articulent l'éventail de leurs démarches, ainsi que les diverses façons dont ils conçoivent les méthodes, les pratiques et les modes de dissémination, de documentation et d'exposition dont disposent les artistes pour la recherche-création.

Over the past two years I have worked alongside colleagues with the Universities Art Association of Canada (UAAC) to increase the participation and exposure of artists in the association's activities, notably, in our annual conference and in *RACAR*. I am so pleased that UAAC has embraced this endeavour and that *RACAR* has welcomed me as guest editor of this inaugural *Practices* section of the journal.

I am critical of the impact on university-based artists of the increasingly prevalent institutional requirement to articulate our methodological frameworks and their application in our work.[1] I trace this imperative to two sources: recent Conservative Party federal budgets that earmark funds for academic research to foster "partnerships between post-secondary researchers and companies" in order to "target research to business needs and transfer knowledge into economic advantage;"[2] and the ways that the Social Sciences and Humanities research Council (SSHRC) has presented ever-changing definition over the past several years, as artists working in universities vie to compete for prized external research grants.

As part of the first cohort of York University's practice-based PhDs in visual arts (studio art) I was preoccupied by the problems of identifying and understanding the differences between art practice and practice-based research; the relationship between the criteria and assessment guidelines for written work and those for works of art; and the challenges presented by inviting artists to use art to create knowledge rather than using knowledge to create art. My main concern was to identify the contributions artists can make that are unique to artists and that do not duplicate the works of other scholars. This translated, for my doctoral and continuing research, into my focus on the activities of my art practice as methods, rather than on the form, meaning, or contents of the works of art produced (which are already very effectively addressed both by artist statements and by writing about art by critics, art historians, curators, and others). In my dissertation[3] I argued for the importance for artists to define our own terms of reference in relation to the practices, methods, and criteria used in peer assessment within academia. While working on this *Practices* section I asked Christof Migone if in his work the text is as vital as the action, the photograph as communicative as the performance, the battered microphone as evocative as the amplified sound of its destruction. In other words, do these elements have equal footing as forms of scholarly dissemination and expression within his art practice? He replied that they rarely have equal footing within an academic context, where peer review is conducted on the basis of external criteria that privilege the word.

There are so many ways that standard practices for artists' research diverge from those in many other disciplines, and we are in a position now, or perhaps are obliged, to name and articulate these practices and modes. In this vein, I am relieved and happy that the editorial team of *RACAR* agreed with me that it is both impossible and undesirable to attempt to conduct a blind or double blind review process for artists' research appearing in the journal, since documentation for our works can so readily be found online on artist and gallery websites, and on the pages of so many art journals and blogs. I understand the contributors' pages in this new *Practices* section to be a form of documentation of original research and believe that such documentation, like art works, is best disseminated as widely and in as many forms as possible.

I selected the contributions of Marlene MacCallum, Barbara Meneley, Christof Migone, David Morrish, and Donna Szoke for this first *Practices* section because, though wildly diverse in their approaches, each articulates a form of research that complicates the way that the creative and the scholarly have been held and continue to be held at a distance from each other. At the level of methodology, my email dialogue with these contributors mirrors my position that for artist-researchers, the functions of research, creation, and dissemination are complexly iterative, intertwined, and reflexive. This idea is not new. A survey of the existing literature on practice-based and other research methodologies will uncover a plethora of articles articulating it in various ways.[4] What is new is a broadening of the

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discourse within artist-research cultures in universities across Canada.

Marlene MacCallum's work highlights research-creation as a linear-yet-circular and ongoing process, where, as I see it, what is often considered the end game—dissemination—is placed into a hermeneutic circle of continuity that locates the experience of knowledge (lived and shared) as necessarily reflexive and as taking place throughout a project's life and beyond. MacCallum has collaborated with David Morrish on a SSHRC-funded project that explores "dissemination as an integral part of the creative cycle." In our email exchanges MacCallum identified her "uneasy relationship" with the formality of installing art within galleries. In her practice the artist book has become increasingly important as both a creative and a disseminative form. She has noted a shift in her own practice from the privileging of the unique print to the iteration of source images in explorations that include making, sharing, and engaging with viewers who are also collaborators and neighbours. "Practice-based research," MacCallum notes, "engages direct and immediate application and realization of knowledge" in what can be understood as a linear process of research-creation-dissemination. However, working within Corner Brook's Townsite area and with her neighbours there allows MacCallum to engage a public directly in knowledge sharing and exchange: the "practice is the inquiry itself," a form of experiential learning for both herself and her townsfolk, and in this sense the process is not so linear. The bookworks function as both art work and documentation of the inquiry.

The possibilities for re-arranging the timeline for research-creation-dissemination presented by MacCallum's work have a counterpoint in the possibilities presented in David Morrish's re-arranging of the materials and processes for making art objects with art objects themselves. Morrish makes use of the installation trope not as a form of public dissemination, but as a self-directed "resource for the creation of new art works," as he described it in our email exchanges, "a framework for more real work yet to come." For Morrish, the disseminated objects are publications, "paper objects that function in the space between the document and the art-object." He transforms the personal ritual of collecting into the creation of a fictionalized museum located in his private studio without framing the practice as an artwork in itself. *The Lyric Cranium* is a fascinating expression both of the ways that artists self-engage and of the ways that they communicate these engagements: "The viewer may exist only as the person who sees and reads the ephemera" produced—the photographs, photogravures, mixed-media prints, custom wallpapers, broadsheets, print-on-demand books, and videos that are created both to be placed inside and disseminated outside the installation. *The Lyric Cranium* serves as a multi-layered set of productive simulations of research, creation, and practice that softens the distinctions that are too often made between dissemination and documentation.

Christof Migone's work highlights the experience of anticipation that punctuates an art practice—even if, as he wrote to me, "at best the artist functions as a filter." When I asked him to share his thoughts about the distinctions made by SSHRC between research and creation (by naming these as two separate activities) and about re-positioning art from being the object of scholarly inquiry to being constituted as a form of scholarly inquiry in itself, he rightly and gently admonished me for asking. For Migone such a line of inquiry reinforces both the entrenchment of arbitrary distinctions between "research," "creation," and "scholarship" and a misguided definition of what is deemed to be "creation," as if it "comes out of nowhere."[5] His argument is not so much that art making and research are the same thing, but that since "artists do their research, the term 'research-creation' is redundant." Migone's proposal in *The Micro Series* to "punctuate every moment" suggests the risk both of undifferentiated equalization and of permitting the amplification of each and every moment to the level of "the noticeable." If research-creation is a redundant term, can an articulated equalization of the activities engaged through it serve to be revelatory (if only, as MacCallum shared with me, to exercise an "educational function in helping non-fine arts colleagues understand that there is rigour" in the work of the artist)? Yet Migone's works rarely seem to be didactically articulated: instead he places recipients in a position that renders them capable-of-knowing without such a strenuously explanatory set of objectives. He does not speak it.

For Donna Szoke, art practice is a thing "in flux" that also highlights a sort of Deleuzian immanence in the "shift from transcendental knowledge to integrated action," and perhaps also from doing to knowing. While Szoke is skeptical of the idea that "research implies a rational order by which we justify creative outcomes," she nonetheless describes her work as if critical engagement plus theoretical reflection equals the production of artworks. It is very clear that nothing is so straightforward for Szoke, yet she, and perhaps all of us, falls into such linguistic traps when attempting to translate from thought to communication. In our email exchange Szoke echoed my fears that in speaking of research-creation, even if critically, we run the risk of entrenching it: "I am hopeful and skeptical," she wrote, "in this cultural moment where research-creation signals the possibility of an approach to art scholarship within a richer context of process and enfoldment," but with a "deep suspicion that this current moment is steeped in neoliberal agendas of

non-self-apparent rationalism." Cutting through such fears is Szoke's linking and integration of thinking and making, of process, thought, and response, and of the "reasonable & senseless," which may well hold true for all creative practices.

Barbara Meneley demonstrates the balanced, or holistic, methodology about which I have been writing. When I asked her what contributions to scholarly knowledge artists can and do make, she replied, "What is meant by 'scholarly knowledge?' As scholarly researchers, artists have opportunities to name all the ways learning happens and model the potential in research that reflects balanced ways of knowing." Meneley describes the way that a "gesture learned with the right hand can be translated and expressed with the foot…[and that by] tracing colonial maps [she] can know the human hands that made them." These are the sorts of inward-oriented or self-reflexive experiences of an individual in the making. Like Morrish's *Wunderkammer*, they describe how art is used and how to use art as a strategy for personal transformation and for social and political critique. Can we "appropriate, subvert, and reshape" entrenched values and criteria for rigorous scholarship in the same way that Meneley does with colonial visual communication strategies, to "tease dominant" ideologies and "interrogate" slippages and gaps? And shall we attempt the same in a self-critique of definitions of *artist*, *creation*, and *research* in a way that challenges stereotypes about what artists do and what art is capable of affecting?

SSHRC currently defines research-creation as "an approach to research that combines creative and academic research practices,"[6] as if creative research practices were not, or should not be understood as, a form of academic practice. As if, to echo Migone, academic research practices came out of nowhere. In my own contribution to the *Practices* section, I note that my *Imaging Saturn* project engages activities within the academic, art, and astronomy communities in ways that are sometimes indistinguishable, where "for example, a weekend spent camping is a form of dissemination of artistic knowledge, the creation of drawings is a form of investigative research, and a gallery exhibition is a form of information gathering." A practice-based research methodology means that dragging my friends, colleagues, and students out in pyjamas at midnight to photograph the aurora borealis can become a rigorous academic method.

The contributors to this issue of *Practices* present their knowledge in their own voices, both visually and textually. My main editorial goal has been to highlight artists' thinking in relation to their work processes and finished works, within and up against the framework of practice-based research/research-creation. I hope that this *Practices* section serves to elevate perceptions of artists' research. As the primary sources of knowledge about our work—and by work I mean all the work of our practices, not only the art objects we produce—we as artists have agency in experiencing, sharing, and presenting that knowledge in countless ways.

Notes

1   These were discussed during the panels I chaired at the 2012 and 2013 annual UAAC conferences.

2   Government of Canada, *Budget 2012*, Chapter 3.1. http://www.budget.gc.ca/2012/plan/chap3-1-eng.html (accessed 15 July 2012). Budget 2014 does not specifically mention knowledge creation that cannot be applied instrumentally to economic advantage or business need: http://www.budget.gc.ca/2014/docs/plan/pdf/budget2014-eng.pdf, p. 116 (accessed 24 February 2014). This is of course not unique to Canada: Brad Buckley and John Conomos note that the 2008 Review of Australian Higher Education *Bradley Report* harnesses "knowledge and research to productivity, 'living standards,' and the wealth of the Nation." Buckley and Conomos, "Introduction," *Rethinking the Contemporary Art School: the Artist, the PhD, and the Academy*, Nova Scotia: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 2009, p. 4.

3   *Disciplining Art Practice: Work, Hobby, and Expertise in Practice-Based Scholarship (Blurry Canada, Potager, Scrabble)*, York University, 2012.

4   An excellent reading list can be found on the website of the Transart Institute: http://www.transart.org/artistic-research-reading-list/ (accessed 24 February 2014)

5   I owe thanks to Migone for inspiring the title of this section.

6   Government of Canada, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, "Definition of Terms," http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/funding-financement/programs-programmes/definitions-eng.aspx#a22 (accessed 18 June 2012; 13 October 2013; 02 March 2014).

Marlene MacCallum

Dissemination as an Integral Component of the Creative Cycle

My current program of research-creation activities, *Artists' Publishing: An Investigation into Digital Media as a Means to Integrate Dissemination into the Creative Cycle*, considers the impact of various distribution systems as an integral component in the generation of the work. Prior to this, I had used almost exclusively the photogravure process in the creation of hand-printed hand-bound artist's books and prints. This project has been a radical departure in that I have created interconnected but distinctly different iterations of source imagery, each experimenting with a different form of production, dissemination, and viewer interaction. The production methods include large editions that will be widely disseminated, digital formats accessible through electronic methods, and hand-printed and bound works that are experienced in the context of special collections or exhibitions. The impact of the specific materiality and nature of interaction has been integrated into the form of each piece.

I have created a series of works inspired by the experience of living in Corner Brook's Townsite area on the west coast of Newfoundland. Between 1924 and 1934 the pulp mill built one hundred and fifty homes to house the mill's management and skilled labourers. To date I have taken photographs in eight Type 4 homes, all the same model as the one in which I live. This has been the context for exploring the paradoxical phenomenon of simultaneous conformity and individualization that occurs in a company town. Having grown up in a housing development in suburban Montreal, my earliest memory of home is of living in a space that is reminiscent of my neighbours' spaces. Related to this formative memory, each work in the series explores distinct sequential structures that present unnervingly similar dwelling spaces. Viewing the work builds an image memory that evokes a visual equivalent of the uncanny, a form of déjà vu.

Theme and Permutation is a response to the architectural design variations of the Type 4 Townsite house. I selected eight different window images. The sixteen offset lithographic plates were custom printed in twenty-nine separate press runs, creating varied layering of the window images.

Glaze: Reveal and *Veiled* present twenty-four images of Townsite windows grouped and layered into two distinct sequences. The structure is a *dos à dos* (two books bound together, readable from opposite directions), and each side offers a different visual metaphor for memory. *Reveal* creates intermingled memories that slowly unpeel into a singular image, whereas *Veiled* presents layered spaces suggestive of blurred recollections.

ABOVE: *Corner, 2013*. Hand-bound codex style bookwork with slipcase, book block printed in photogravure on paper, covers inkjet-printed on coated tyvek, 25.1 × 12.7 × 1.9 cm (closed).
TOP: With Jason Wells, from the collaborative pinhole project *Strangely Familiar*, 2013. Inkjet print, 29.2 × 35.6 cm.

Page spread from *Glaze: Veiled*, 2013. Inkjet printed, 21 × 41.9 cm.

Corner offers an interplay between the architecture of the book and of the imagery. Photographs of entrances and exits, illuminated by interior and exterior light, flow over the pages to meet at the gutter. Each folded page spread cradles an unoccupied space charged with implied conversations between absent inhabitants.

Strangely Familiar is a collaborative project between me and twenty-four participants from the Corner Brook region. I established a digital studio in the Grenfell Campus Art Gallery and spent six weeks working there. Participants were provided with pinhole cameras and invited to make images of their dwelling spaces. I then created an image in response to each image, integrating the pairings into one pictorial space, and displayed the resulting prints.

Originally, I had thought of using digital media only to disseminate the work and facilitate access. However, bookworks are inherently intimate, and decisions about the context for viewing, and implications of producing works in small quantities, large editions, or through computer-mediation, are now folded into the earliest stages of my creative process. Contemplating the nature of reading/viewing has led me to reconsider the role of the multiple and to challenge the imperative of broad distribution in favour of the quality of experience for the individual.

As an artist working with the rarely used process of photogravure, I had previously assumed that my work would always be made using this signature form of realization, but in my role as a university-based researcher, the requirement to engage in knowledge dissemination has led me to emphasize sharing my techno-
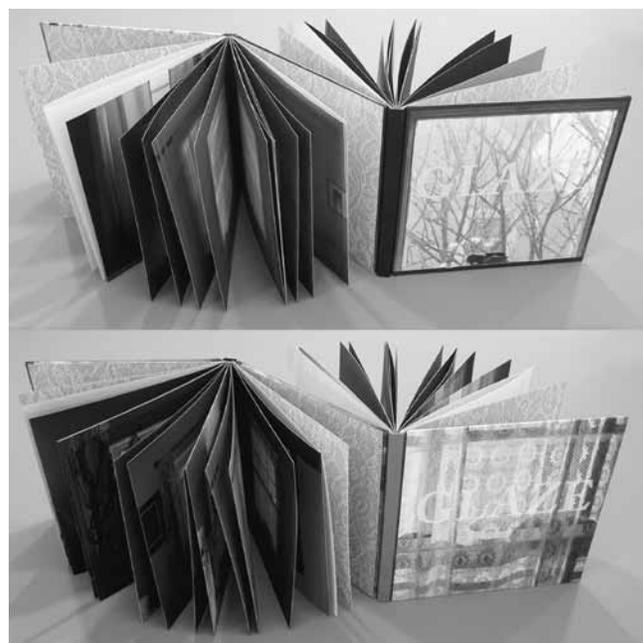
Reveal and *Veiled*, 2013. Hand-bound dos à dos bookworks with wrapper, injket printed, 21 × 21 × 21 cm (closed).

logical expertise. The current project has propelled me toward more content-driven work with greater accessibility by virtue of the range of methods of production.

David Morrish

The Lyric Cranium

I am near the end of a multi-year SSHRC insight development grant, on which I am collaborating with Marlene MacCallum (primary investigator, Memorial University, Grenfell) and co-applicants Pierre LeBlanc (Memorial University, Grenfell) and Clifton Meador (Columbia College, Chicago). The project examines *Artists' Publishing: An Investigation into Digital Media as a Means to Integrate Dissemination into the Creative Cycle*. In this context, I have been building/assembling/augmenting/filling a *Wunderkammer*-like space with my personal collections of natural history items, thanatos-related ephemera, miscellaneous detritus, and memorabilia, which I had been saving for decades until I devised a purpose for their use and display.

The museum is called *The Lyric Cranium* and is fictionally described as the *G. Hornan Postmortem Portrait Archive &*

Brunion Collection, an assemblage of documents and objects originally belonging to archivist and collector Homer C. Brunion and others, and organized by Griff Hornan before his mysterious disappearance in 1949. The current curator, as the story goes, took over the Hornan collections and set them up in their current form.

I built this installation in my studio to act as a resource for the creation of new artworks: works on paper (photographs and photogravures), published ephemera, bookworks, texts, paintings, videos, and sculptures. In *The Lyric Cranium*, my practice of scouring the world for visual inspiration can be distilled and personalized within an immersive still life, complete with the biographical fiction of faux provenance. This personal archive provides a similar experience to that of many public installations and museum collections. In this way, it can act as a catalyst

ABOVE: Post Mortem wall, *The Lyric Cranium*, 2013
TOP: Ephemera being printed at Columbia College of Art (Chicago) by Brad Freeman, for inclusion in *Journal of Art Books (JAB). The Lyric Cranium*, 2013.
Photo credit: Clifton Meador

Wunderkamer space with skulls. *The Lyric Cranium*, 2013

Details: taxidermy and preserved animal specimens.

for the production of more traditional artworks, whether multiples or singular works.

My main goal is to create publications that are portable means by which the public can access my museum. I print documents using various media that are at once mundane (using mass production technologies) and semi-precious (handmade or period processes). The use of print-on-demand web-resources also provides ways to create publications for use within a more complex bookwork or for stockpiling multiples for broader dissemination. I experiment with a range of methods to create paper ephemera such as broadsides, wallpaper, paperwork, postcards, artists' stamps, and other documents, blending such extremes as photogravure, inkjet, photo-polymer letterpress and lead-type letterpress, Xerox, offset litho, and video. By continuing to explore the hybridization of digital technologies and traditional processes that was begun in an earlier SSHRC-funded project, I create paper objects that function in the space between the artifact/document and the art-object.

The images of *The Lyric Cranium* reproduced here attest to its current incomplete state, as artifact-objects are continually accumulated, organized, and re-positioned in an ongoing process of affective recombination. Half the physical space is organized as a testament to the *Wunderkammer* tradition, while the other half is inspired by Claes Oldenburg's *Mouse Museum* on display at the MoMA in 2013. Creative fabrications and other artists' works appear within the installation as well. Artists have been invited to experience the space, and some have created work in response. Some of these objects have been incorporated into the collection and display, attesting to the matryoshka-like self-referential development of the museum content.

For a traditional photo-based visual artist like I am, this new conduit and focus for my interests is an exciting departure from print and paper. It illustrates how one's studio practice can evolve and drastically change the form of one's art production, allowing for unexpected departures and discoveries along the way.

Regurgitata, 2013. Example of letterpress display tag, customized with laser printing for various artifacts on display. Printed at Columbia College of Art, Chicago.

Christof Migone

The Micro Series

Saturate every atom.[1]

Virginia Woolf

Oberon is a numeral with a water-jet diameter of 10,000 hours and a height of about: 2,220,000 hours.[2]

Adolf Wölfli

What if every moment of the day, and of our lives, were punctuated? Every gesture marked? What if the infinitesimally small were amplified to become noticeable, recordable, replayable? To "saturate every atom," as Woolf exhorts, would be to imprint the everywhere and everytime of everything, to suffuse space until it suffocates. *The Micro Series* asks these questions, but adds an element of absurdity like the one suggested by the idiosyncratic and eccentric composer Wölfli in the second epigraph. With the Oberon he was attempting to devise a numbering system that would encompass infinity; in *The Micro Series* I settle for numbers that allude to infinity but are infinitely more manageable. The numbers (e.g., one thousand, one million) that I use serve as arbitrary and abstract constants, and the concrete and repetitive actions performed to attain them establish an infinite variety of microgestures among the seemingly indistinguishable actions. In short, the difference in repetition is made manifest. The goal is a segmentation of the mundane to reveal the extraordinary in the ordinary.

Hit Parade (Porto), 2011

The Micro Series consists of two principal components: the first, alluded to above, is a structural element that translates into the staging of simple actions that count, repeat, and parcel out time. The second component is more tangible, and it could not be more concrete: a microphone. In this series the microphone is foregrounded; it is exploited not only sonically but also as an object and image. In other words, the microphone's iconicity is explicitly explored. At its origin, as noted in *Chambers Concise Dictionary*, the word *microphone* meant "an instrument for

Hit Parade (Winnipeg), 2011

intensifying very small sounds," which, of course, is reflected in the word's etymology: from the Greek, *mikros*, "small" and *phone*, "sound, voice." Thus, in its very definition the microphone can be related to the attention paid to the diminutive. In this series the microphone is utilized metaphorically as a surveying tool, a mapping device, a mining implement. It also becomes, literally, a sounding device that not only amplifies an instrument but is itself turned into one—a crude, hammer-like instrument made to produce a simple rhythm. And since it is not designed to undergo the abuse produced by such repetitive action, the mic becomes an instrument that, over time, displays the damage it has incurred both physically and, in its diminishing ability to reproduce sound, sonically.

The accompanying set of images attests to the abuse endured by the microphones used in *Hit Parade*. This performance is one of the works comprising *The Micro Series*, which also includes *Microhole*, *Microfall*, *Hit Maker*, *Hit*, and *Micro* (this last gives its title to the entire photo series). In *Hit Parade*, the hitting is collective. Participants are asked to lie face down on the ground and pound the pavement with the microphone one thousand times. The sound of each person's hitting is amplified. Performers choose their own rhythm and intensity. They take a pause of whatever length they wish at every multiple of one hundred.

The Micro Series: simple actions requiring no specific skills, playful and immediate, yet also violent and obsessive. Sound, presented at its most basic rhythmicity. An accumulation of tiny moments, heretofore unnoticed and dismissible. An instrument punctuating time and marking space. An investigation of the microphone as instrument of its own abuse, its own demise. In this spirit, and in conclusion, I will let Alfred Jarry sketch a surreal scene in which the microphone makes an appearance:

> Concerning the Musical Jet
>
> Now, it is necessary to know that the valve installed at the neck of the pit's mouth was of thin rubber; and to be familiar with the discoveries of Mr. Chichester Bell, cousin of Mr. Graham Bell, the illustrious inventor of the telephone, one should be aware that a stream of water falling upon an india-rubber sheet stretched over the upper end of a tube constitutes a *microphone*, that a liquid jet breaks up at certain rates more easily than others and, according to its nature, will respond to certain sounds in preference to others; finally, one should not be scandalized if we mention that the bishop's loins secreted this quite unconsciously musical jet whose amplified vibrations he perceived at the moment of taking leave of his reading. [3]

Notes

[1]   Virginia Woolf in Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus, Capitalism and Schizophrenia* [1983], trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis, 1987), 329.

Micro (One on One), 2014
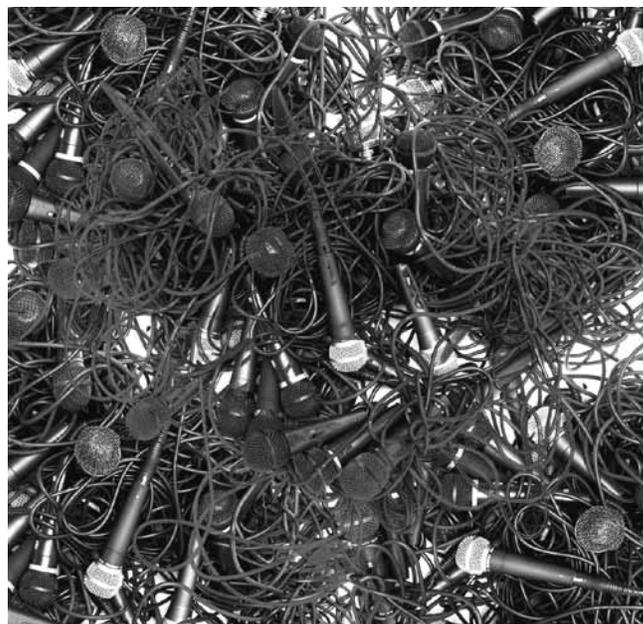
Micro (Compound), 2014

[2]   Adolf Wölfli, *In the Realms of the Unreal: "Insane" Writings*, ed. John G. H. Oakes (New York, 1991), 94.

[3]   Alfred Jarry, *Exploits and Opinions of Doctor Faustroll, Pataphysician: A Neo Scientific Novel [1911]*, in *Selected Works of Alfred Jarry*, trans. Simon Watson Taylor (New York, 1965), 233.

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Donna Szoke

Researchify: Immanence and the Artist-Researcher[1]

As an interdisciplinary artist I use video, new media, animation, writing, installation, experimental collaboration, and drawing to investigate immanence, haptic perception, and non-visual knowledge in moving images. I have been particularly drawn to animation for its inherent ability to suggest the flight of the imagination and the rupture between what is actual and what can be represented. Indeed, the unseen-yet-apparent is often the driving force behind my work. My most recent research explores site-specific media art in public venues. Ephemeral media-based installations allow me to connect an art experience to emergent technologies and to our very localized, specific, sensory ways of being in the world. In these works, people, technology, and the landscape combine in magical surprises.

The epithet *artist researcher* fits me since my body of work has arisen through a critical engagement and theoretical reflection resulting in the production of artworks. Artist research can be defined as either "research *for* visual arts (the array of practices that both inform and constitute artistic production) or research *through* visual art (where artistic practice becomes a vehicle for producing and presenting new knowledge)."[2] For me, thinking and making are inextricably linked; they are, as Janneke Wesseling puts it, "research *in and through* art."[3] As the term *artist researcher* becomes a burgeoning category within academia, however, I question the basic tenets of this nomenclature. What fuels the expectation that artists can or must "researchify" their practice? And does "research" imply a rational order according to which we justify creative outcomes?

reasonable & senseless is the title of a gallery-based twenty-channel video installation I produced in 2005 to 2008.[4] Each channel shows a historic, human-made disaster (such as a mushroom cloud) with animated smoke letters superimposed. When read across the twenty channels, the letters spell out the title of the work. The idea of what is *reasonable & senseless* implies that pure reason itself is a senseless force, as exemplified in these technical disasters, which are not accidents per se but logical conclusions to a series of foreseeably ill-conceived steps. They demonstrate that reason alone is a senseless guide to invention and creation and, as we see through studio practice, a limited tool. Thus, given the limits and senselessness of reason, how might we articulate the way individual processes emerge through studio practice? Besides reason and imaginative intellect, what other types of knowledge are at play for artist researchers?

There is a form of thinking inherent in making that can never be fully stripped from object-hood. The art object is not just a thing; it is a thing in flux. At times it is merely an expensive object, at others, a deeply affective encounter charged with meaning, and, most often, both at once. In a studio visit with unfinished work, the artist and the viewer conjointly confront creative struggles in a shared encounter. In opening to unfurling work we engage in a phenomenological co-creative trajectory.

ABOVE: *reasonable & senseless: "&"* channel, 54 sec., 2008. Animated smoke ampersand superimposed upon a nuclear mushroom cloud video. https://vimeo.com/26110747.
TOP: *Invisible Histories*, 3D animation, 19 sec., 2012. https://vimeo.com/51470664.
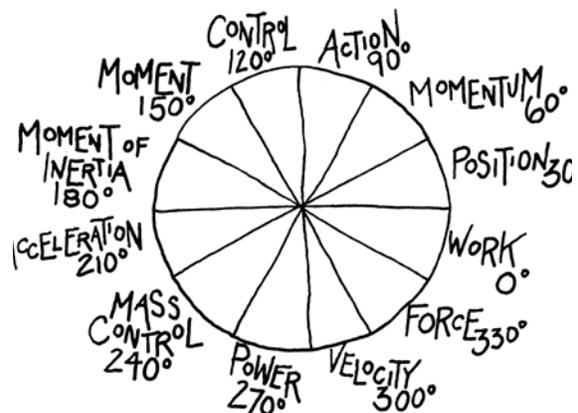
The Geometry of Meaning. Ink drawing. 20×30cm. 2013. The institutional urgencies of quantification within an unquantifiable arena, such as art, often inspire me.

Failuer. Lino cut print, 26x35cm, 2013. Limited edition print (process blue typesetters' ink on Arches 88 paper). The work speaks to the impossibility of fully explaining or articulating the creative process. As a Canadian work of art, it also fails in both official languages.

Making and thinking are coterminous, integrating both critical and creative processes.

I believe that, in studio pedagogy, co-creation is the only ethical way to teach how artist research develops and how moments of creative unfurling occur: uncertain, barely perceived, in error, in omission, repressed, or barely visible and limping. My own practice entails an inherent inarticulate process which is in fact a lacuna, to use Giorgio Agamben's term,[5] a pre-cultural pre-lingual self, indivisible from its enmeshment with the world. I press up against making, precisely because I can never utter experience any more than I can utter what resides in my own non-language, in the recesses of my self.

To embrace the immanent, I would argue, is to refuse a separation between concept and form, to refuse dematerialization. Further, it allows for the artist research position to integrate knowing and doing, visuality and haptic engagement, expertise and collective not-knowing. It affords the possibility of unfurling and flow.

Notes

[1]   A draft of this paper was first presented at the Universities Art Association of Canada (UAAC) Conference on 2 November 2012 in Montreal, for the panel *Disciplining Art Practice: Getting a Feel for the Game*, which was moderated by Risa Horowitz (University of Regina), and included Cliff Eyland (University of Manitoba), Tanya Mars (University of Toronto), and Christof Migone (Western University). On the panel we discussed the burgeoning category of the artist-researcher within university structures. Introducing the panel, Horowitz cited survey responses reported in the *Formative Evaluation of SSHRC's* [now defunct pilot program] *Research/Creation in Fine Arts Program: Final Report* that lead one to believe that artists must necessarily 'researchify' their practices.

[2]   Banff Centre Program Call. "Thematic Residency: Making Artistic Inquiry Visible", http://www.banffcentre.ca/programs/program. aspx?id=628 (accessed 8 January 2008), n.p.

[3]   Janneke Wesseling, "Introduction," in Wesseling, ed., *See it Again, Say it Again: The Artist as Researcher*, Amsterdam: Valiz Antennae, 2011, p. 2.

[4]   *reasonable & senseless*: Surrey Art Gallery, 21 May–10 July, 2005; Video Pool, Winnipeg, MB, 10 November–8 December, 2006; Richmond Art Gallery, 18 January–28 February, 2008.

[5]   Giorgio Agamben articulates the space of the lacuna when he writes about the impossibility of testimony. For what testimony reveals, at its core, is "the non-language to which language answers, in which language is born." Agamben, Giorgio. *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, New York: Zone Books, 1999, p. 38.
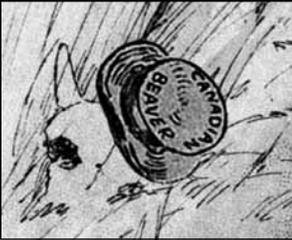
Barbara Meneley

Unsettling the Last Best West: Restorying Settler Imaginaries

As a practice-based researcher working site responsively in media, installation, performance, and dialogic practice, I combine theoretical inquiry with contemporary intermedia art through all these forms. My current project investigates how art was used in the promotion and dissemination of colonial ideologies and the recruitment of settlers to Canada in the early twentieth century. It engages the potential for creative practice to activate strategies of reimagining and restorying. I develop this work from my settler descendent perspective, primarily for a settler audience.

My focus is the study of immigration advertising, specifically under Clifford Sifton, Canada's Minister of the Interior from 1896 to 1905. As the Canadian government sought to populate the prairie west, Sifton's innovative methods recruited immigrants: white people from Britain, the US, and northern Europe. The successful ideological campaigns employed an array of tactics, including travelling exhibits, installations, film, and the innovative design and distribution of printed materials. My visual and material engagements are shaped to echo Sifton's multi-faceted strategies across a range of media. I engage critically and creatively with this rich and varied source material to reactive, reframe, and restory. Through this process I aim to build and enact creative strategies of decolonization.

I am currently shaping three bodies of this work. My animated video *Leaf Forever* is made from still images found in a 1903 promotional brochure titled *Canada: The Granary of the World*.[1] By reactivating and reframing this material over one hundred years after it was made, I interrogate and tease how colonial ideologies slip into the present. The soundtrack to my video is a

An audience sing-along video animation that appropriates and subverts still images from early colonial Canadian immigration advertising.

1910 recording of *The Maple Leaf Forever*;[2] viewers are invited to sing along by following a bouncing ball. This invitation to embodied viewership disrupts the everyday, possibly unconscious, cultural performance of contemporary settler colonialism.

Unmapping Assiniboia, currently in process, is a series of cartographic pieces that focus on structures of colonial claiming. Working from archival settlement maps, I draw, reproduce, and then erase the colonial tracks, digging out the grid, the railways, and the names. This is a process, a ritual of undoing. The pieces show the scars, the detritus of removal, but present a possible decolonized land.

Unmapping Assiniboia: Without Words, digital sketch detail, 2014

Unmapping Assiniboia: Erasure, digital sketch detail, 2014

Video sill, Leaf Forever, 4'38" 2012

Also in process is my performance work, *Unsettling*, based on the vermillion-coloured horse-drawn exhibition wagons used by Canadian land agents working farm to farm and door to door, recruiting settlers one at a time. A vermillion costume containing and displaying static and time-based media, *Unsettling* appropriates the capital in the personal touch. Colonial recruiters worked face to face and I do too, as I invite viewers to hunt through my clothing for small video projections and various other samples of colonial booty. This offers a close physical relationship between the viewer, the source material, and the appropriator/subverter/maker/performer—me. The small and intimate operation of *Unsettling* is crafted to assert that it is not only possible, but also *necessary*, to imagine decolonization in personal, tiny, but doable ways.

Settler recruitment campaigns convincingly demonstrate that people are moved through creative strategies, through words and pictures, inducements and appeals. It took these diverse approaches to construct settler imaginaries, and it requires wide-ranging and creative strategies to disrupt them. Practice-based research creation is ideally suited to engage this ground.
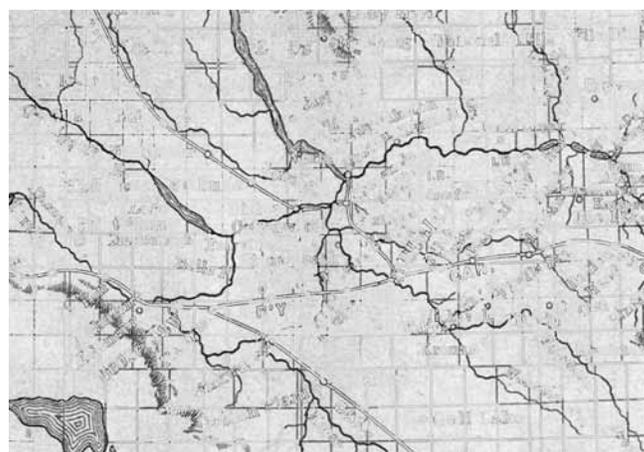
Unmapping Assiniboia: Without Words, digital sketch detail, 2014

Notes

1   *Canada, the Granary of the World*, Toronto: Eastern & Western Land Corporation, 1903.
2   Words and music by Alexander Muir, 1836.

Risa Horowitz

Imaging Saturn—Amateurism as a Critical Method of Art Making

Imaging Saturn is a long-term project that emerged from seeing Saturn through a telescope for the first time in May 2010—a profound and sublime personal experience. It raised questions about the incomprehensible scale of the universe and the ways in which we make sense of it logically and intuitively. The project allows me to explore crossovers and distinctions between the training that defines the expert and the enthusiasm that animates the amateur within the field of astronomy, while at the same time identifying comparable characterizations made within the research-creation paradigm. *Imaging Saturn* engages multiple intertwined modes of research, art making, and dissemination, motivated by a methodological framework that includes a balanced engagement with the academic, art, and astronomy communities. The project recognizes that sometimes these intertwined activities—methods—are indistinguishable from one another, as when, for example, a weekend spent camping is a form of dissemination of artistic knowledge, the creation of drawings is a form of investigative research, and a gallery exhibition is a form of information gathering.

I have become an amateur astronomer within a professional and scholarly art practice that aggravates boundaries between expert and amateur, work and hobby, leisure and productivity. At the core of the project is an ongoing collection process based on the capture of at least one image of Saturn for each year of its orbit around the sun: a 29.42 year-long cycle. I have so far recorded images for the first four (Earth) years of the project, which started in 2011 and will run until 2040. This component of the project has challenged me to broaden my base of knowledge in the sciences of photography, digital imaging, optics, and astronomy.

Aside from the obvious learning curve related to the workings of the solar system and universe, astrophotography is a highly specialized sub-discipline with a unique set of tools and techniques. These include operating a telescope that requires precise physical orientation to the cosmos to account for Earth's rotation, and acquiring images through video capture for processing multiple still frames into image "stacks" that provide more detailed still images than our "blurry" atmosphere would otherwise permit. I have become an active member of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada (Regina and Toronto centres) to share and receive mentorship and knowledge, and to investigate intersections of creative practices and sciences, highlighting how common interests can be used to bridge disciplinary divides.

ABOVE: 3d printed plaster model of the planet from CAD file. 7.62cm sphere, 22.23cm ring tips (to G-ring). 2014.
TOP: Imaging Saturn (inverted), 11 May 2012.

Labour Day Weekend camping, Grasslands National Park (West Block), Saskatchewan, with 8'' scope. 30 August 2013.
Photo credit: Michael Flaherty.
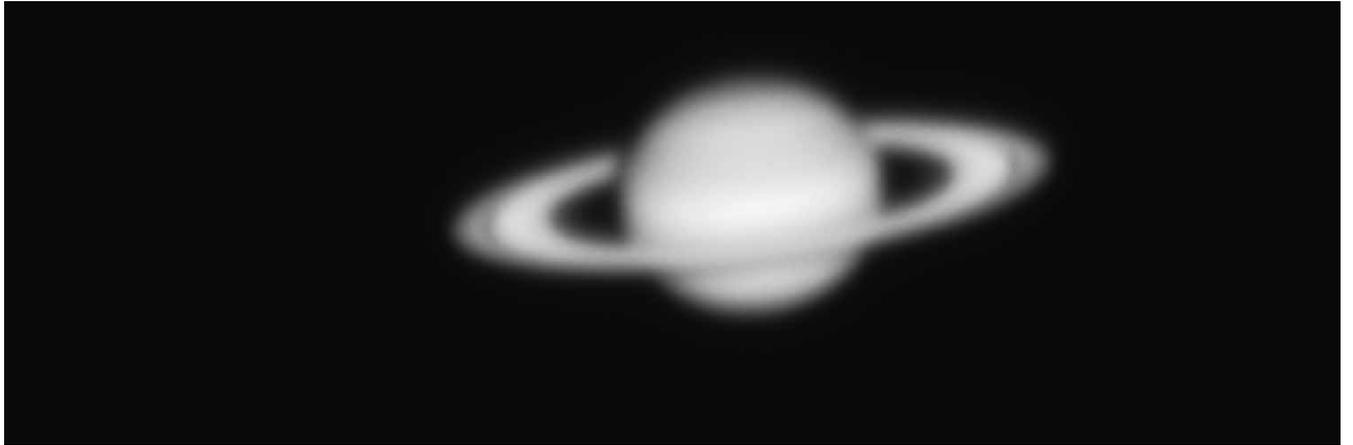
Imaging Saturn 2013. 2012-05-11T22:35:11-04, 22 frames stacked from 29 seconds of video.

I have so far created a series of twenty-nine charcoal draw-ings that depict three views of Saturn on the day of its opposi-tion—that moment each year when the planet is opposite Earth from the Sun—throughout its orbital period. Creating these drawings was both a research and a creation activity insofar as the drawings are finished and exhibited works of art. Making the drawings helped me to visualize and understand relevant planetary and galactic motions as seen from Earth, along with what the planet would look like each year.

I am currently developing a set of kinetic sculptures that place models of the planet against a backdrop of the eclip-tic (the apparent path of the sun along with the thirteen zo-diacal constellations), using cameras in the position of Earth to further visualize the apparent motion of Saturn at various time scales. This component of the project challenges me to develop electronics and programming skills and to collabor-ate with technicians to assist with the engineering and fab-rication of the finished works. This part of the multi-year project includes development and production phases in Re-gina and at an artist's residency at Video Pool in Winnipeg, where a solo exhibition of the completed works is scheduled for 2016.

The project exposes non-artists to art and non-astronomers to astronomy, and it nurtures cross-disciplinary intellectual and creative inquiry. It is positioned across visual and media arts, and across arts and science. It engages in networking and know-ledge-sharing in a way that both expands and blurs the bound-aries between practices and disciplinary domains that remain somewhat fixed and unwavering even within our contemporary interdisciplinary culture.
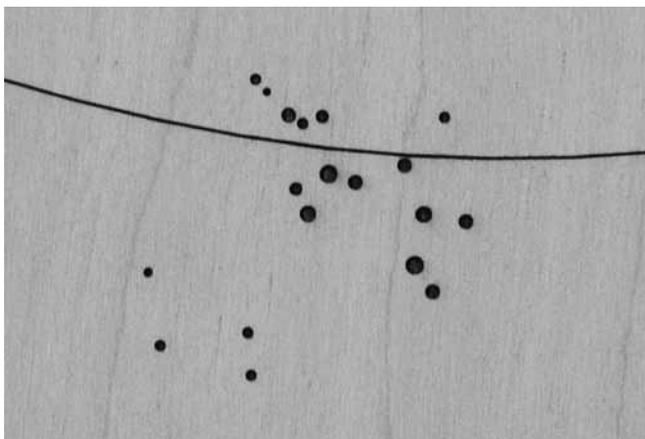
Test imagery for the ecliptic and constellation backdrop of the kinetic models. Sagittarius with teapot. Laser cut baltic birch, 12.7 × 27.94cm detail. 2014.

Imaging Saturn (Oppositions 2024). Charcoal drawing on Arches 88, 38.1×76.2 cm. 2013.