

Dowsing for Failure

Open Space Arts Society
November 24, 2006 – January 20, 2007

Ted Hiebert & Doug Jarvis
Curators

Featuring the works of:

Benjamin Bellas
Nate Larson
Gordon Lebrecht
Daniel Olson
Mike Paget
June Pak
Anthony Schrag

Credits and Acknowledgements

Dowsing for Failure is published in conjunction with an exhibition of the same title organized by Open Space Arts Society November 24, 2006 to January 27, 2007. Curated by Ted Hiebert and Doug Jarvis, *Dowsing for Failure* featured work by Benjamin Bellas, Nate Larson, Gordon Lebrecht, Mike Paget, June Pak, Daniel Olson and Anthony Schrag. Open Space is an artist-run centre in Victoria BC, supported by the Canada Council for the Arts, the Capital Regional District, the BC Arts Council, the Government of British Columbia, self-generated revenue and the commitment of its volunteers. Funding for Daniel Olson's travel was contributed by Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec.

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Foreword

One of the most persistent modernist myths is that of a risk-taking creative process. The resulting failures, misfires and accidents could be readily resuscitated as innovation or, at the very least, as a learning experience. Such courted failure conferred a glamorous edge to the artistic process as distinct from the quotidian aura of failure's idiot cousin, futility. Artist-run centres, Open Space included, could be seen as a response to modernism's risk-taking, failure-teasing codependency: artists founded the centres as places of investigation, where risk was encouraged and failure tolerated. Artist-run culture has reconfigured curatorial practices and changed how contemporary art is presented and disseminated. As Open Space embarks upon its thirty-fifth year, *Dowsing for Failure* extends these historical preoccupations with a provocative critical twist.

Ted Hiebert and Doug Jarvis have re-positioned failure to reveal paradoxes hard-wired into the practices and attitudes of contemporary culture and life. The two artists configured *Dowsing for Failure* with precise insight, and crafted a call for submission that generated intense response from a broad spectrum of artists. Ted and Doug coordinated the entire project, attending to a plethora of details while maintaining their characteristic sense of humor. This publication tracks part of the open-ended and continuing dialogue generated by *Dowsing for Failure*

Open Space appreciates the generosity and contributions of the participating artists in the realization of this project: Benjamin Bellas, Nate Larson, Gordon Lebrecht, Mike Paget, June Pak, Daniel Olson and Anthony Schrag. We appreciate the efforts of the artists who responded to the call who were not included since their interest indirectly shaped the project. Administrative Coordinator Jim Olson contributed to promotion, design and layout. Technician Zoë Kreye along with Ross Macaulay and Program Assistant Jesse Scott installed *Dowsing for Failure*. Volunteers Brian McNevin, Ross Macaulay, Sarah Drake, Shane Polkey and Brian Bennett assisted with the opening and closing events and the installation. Writer Brian Grison voraciously questioned. Gordon Lebrecht's installation was made possible by the special assistance of Erkin Akin. Open Space acknowledges the financial support of the Canada Council for the Arts, the Capital Regional District, the BC Arts Council, Direct Access Program of the Government of British Columbia, and, for Daniel Olson's travel, the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec.

Helen Marzolf
January 2007

Dowsing for Failure

Benjamin Bellas
CHICAGO

Nate Larson
CHICAGO

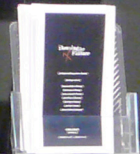
Gordon Lebrecht
TORONTO

Daniel Olson
MONTREAL

Mike Paget
CALGARY

June Pak
TORONTO

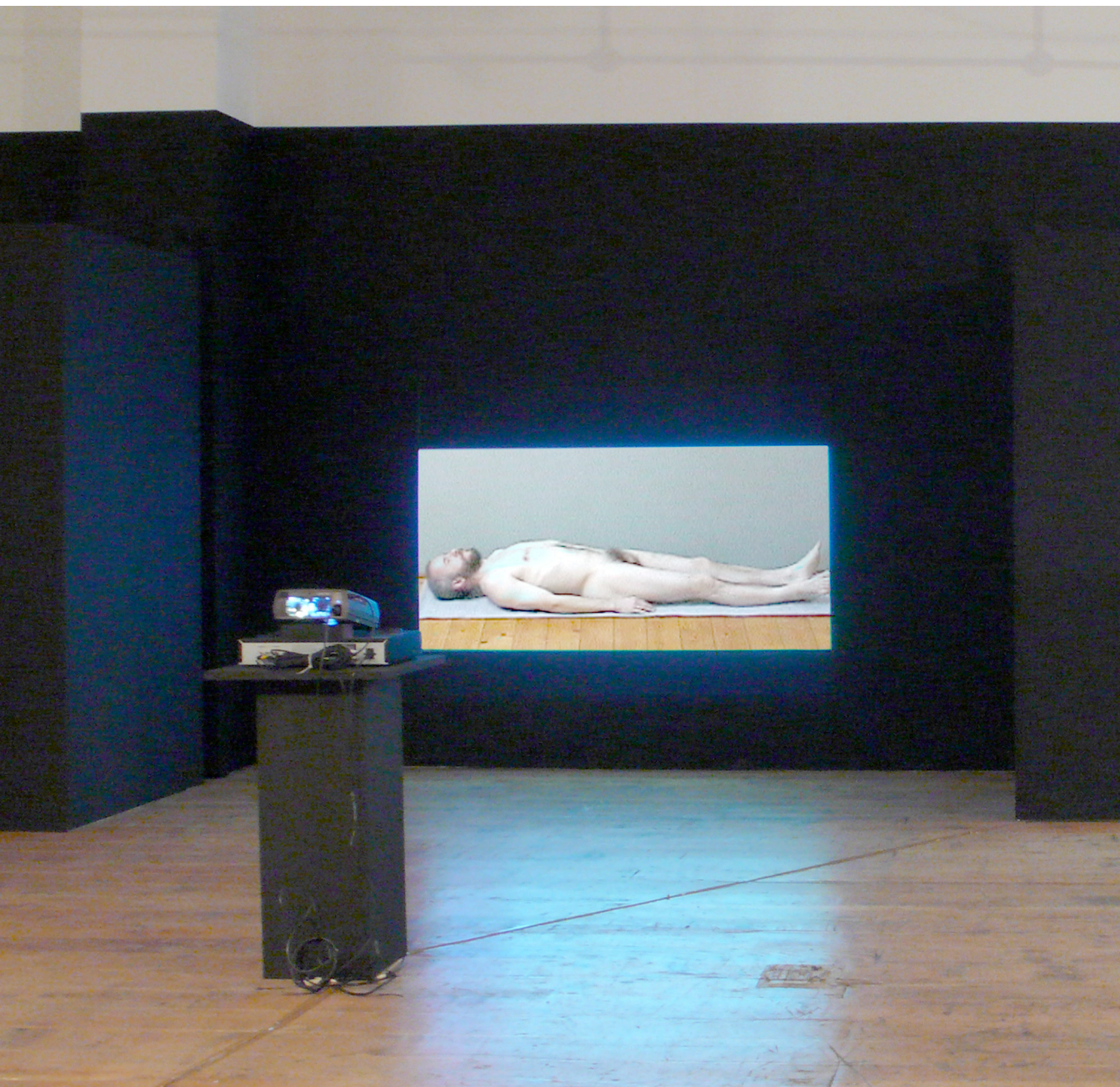
Anthony Schrag
GLASGOW























DOWSING FOR FAILURE

Open Space Arts Society (Victoria, BC)
November 24, 2006 – January 20, 2007

Ted Hiebert & Doug Jarvis, Curators

An international call for submissions was put forward requesting proposals for DOWSING FOR FAILURE. From over sixty submissions received, curators Jarvis and Hiebert composed a short-list of twelve proposals. These proposals were “dowsed” in order to determine the final line-up of artists to be exhibited.

What follows is a copy of the Call for Submissions which was sent out in the summer of 2006.

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

Open Space Arts Society is currently inviting submissions for DOWSING FOR FAILURE, a curated group exhibition slated to run from November 24, 2006 to January 20, 2007.

Curatorial Statement

Failure – as something that cannot be willfully coveted but must, in many ways, be “happened” upon accidentally and in most instances unintentionally – holds, from our perspective, many innovative and intriguing artistic and theoretical possibilities. In exact opposition to the philosophy of the “happy accident” that forms much of the romance of failure as a legitimate element of artistic discovery, DOWSING FOR FAILURE will seek specific artists that have encountered ways of not succumbing to the optimistic and opportunistic mobilization of failure in the name of success. Rather, our interest is in representing creative works in all disciplines that, through discourses of failure, open possibilities for informal discovery rather than mobilizing the proprietary claim to “originality.” While highly political in the privileging of inquiry over declaration, the politics of DOWSING FOR FAILURE are more aptly contextualized as a by-product and side effect of the works to be exhibited rather than an accusation of more linear and calculated political curation.

From our perspective, failure is not something that can – properly speaking – be cultivated. Rather, to intend to fail is to make failure into the spectre of its own success, a self-fulfilling prophecy that optimizes legitimate failure, candy-coating the disastrous with its own form of inverted and anaesthetized sensitivity. This is not the “type” of failure in which we are interested. In other words, we are not interested in the vampiric “turning” of failure into success, preferring instead to acknowledge the profoundly traumatic experience of failure as a moment of existential futility in which worlds and selves collapse into nothingness, disavowed even by themselves, phoenixes that refuse to be reborn from the ashes of their own devastation.

In this spirit, DOWSING FOR FAILURE seeks precisely those moments in which failure is un-recuperable, irreducible or insurmountable. There is, obviously, a paradox involved in the *representation* of such moments, which is how DOWSING FOR FAILURE will avoid the strictly *therapeutic* connotations of failure in favour of its representative renderings. In other words, what we are interested in – in the context of this project – are precisely those moments in which failure cannot be salvaged, but can nevertheless be represented or invoked or suggested, such that the moment of artistic and creative intensity – the notion of art-making as *extreme sport* – fully congeals as *indifferent to its own success* as represented by an equal indifference to its *failure*. Here, the stakes of making art in a contemporary world fully materialize as a project not of making meaning, but rather as strategies for dealing with the fact that there is none. No merit in meaning. No merit in success. And consequently, no merit in failure proper, but rather in those methodologies invoked for mobilizing failure to some other end. And these are ends that (again) cannot be properly intended, but require rather a nuanced representational presence in order to tease out the latent possibilities of their inherently revolutionary form.

Curatorial Method

Following the Call for Submissions for DOWSING FOR FAILURE, we will select a short-list of artists whose work offers possible strategies for the mobilization of failure. From this short list, the final artists to be exhibited will be chosen through a documented series of **dowsing** experiments in which dowsing rods will be used to divine the qualitative relationality of the proposal to the theme of failure. The process (obviously) is flawed, but necessary in order to ensure that the exhibition resists the calculated attempt to successfully *represent* failure, instead gravitating towards the circumstantial and contingent assessment of proposals as representative of a certain undefinable, yet nevertheless present, relationship to the theme.

Consequently, DOWSING FOR FAILURE should be taken literally as a descriptive title and evocative declaration of the premise for the exhibit. We neither condone nor dismiss the potential of dowsing proper as an allowable or legitimate activity. Rather, here we are interested in methods for accumulating works of a certain sort that will fit within a certain parameter of meaning; one that might be seen as evocative rather than didactic, and which consequently requires an invocative method of selection rather than an explicit assessment of categorizable appearances.



Dialogues of Failure

Brian Grison in Conversation with Doug Jarvis & Ted Hiebert

Victoria arts-writer and artist Brian Grison was asked by This Magazine in Toronto to review the “Call for Submissions” for Dowsing for Failure. As preliminary research, a series of email interchanges took place. These have been edited and supplemented for inclusion here.

GRISON: Hello Ted Hiebert. Hello Doug Jarvis. Before we begin these, I want to stress that I am interested in the ideas your Curatorial Statement touches on. My questions are a search for understanding rather than either a critique of your language or your project. I have posed questions as they develop in response to your Curatorial Statement, which I insert into the text of your statement so you can see what has given rise to my question.

Failure – as something that cannot be willfully coveted but must, in many ways, be “happened” upon accidentally and in most instances unintentionally – holds, from our perspective, many innovative and intriguing artistic and theoretical possibilities.

It seems to me that failure can be “coveted.” It’s quite common in social interactions, private neurotic pattern, and Machiavellian relationships – there must be many examples. Failure is very common in the human world. Please comment.

HIEBERT: I agree that failure is common in the human world – this, in many ways, is what makes it both interesting and difficult as a concept to explore. However, I’m not sure that I understand how the “commonality” of failure makes it covetable or even, in any real-world sense, desirable. Isn’t failure more the surprise of encountering that which is beyond control, and perhaps even more specifically, the instances where this lack of control is personally and intimately reinforced? In other words, don’t we find ourselves literally “out of control” when we encounter failure?

JARVIS: I think that with the idea of failure, if you covet something experienced as failure it immediately changes into what one wishes it to be. Thereby changing the nature of what stands as the incommensurable event in its own right. This shift is what we refer to as the happy accident.

GRISON: What do you mean when you say that failure “must be ‘happened’ upon ... unintentionally?” can you give me an example or two?

HIEBERT: From my perspective, this follows from the “accidental” nature of failure. To set oneself up for failure would be a neurotic instance (a self-fulfilling prophecy of sorts), in which one gets what one wants (even if that is not what one thought one wanted – if you want the psychoanalytic explanation). To happen upon failure, by contrast, is to encounter it precisely where one did not expect to, and further where it was undesirable and, most often, unavoidable and unpredictable.,

GRISON: What do you mean by “discourses of failure”? Isn’t this e-mail a ‘discourse of failure’? Or do you mean artists whose work actually ‘fails’ – however we interpret the term?

JARVIS: I think that in this context discourses of failure can refer to the idea that the artist has engaged the term, and has some experience of dealing with it as a concept as well, that the artist is not simply doing a keyword search for submissions containing the word failure and all of its subsequent definitions. That we are asking for considered proposals seems a fair proposition. It is not like we made the term up.

GRISON: Consider the following excerpt from the “Call for Submissions”:

While highly political in the privileging of inquiry over declaration, the politics of DOWSING FOR FAILURE are more aptly contextualized as a by-product and side effect of the works to be exhibited rather than an accusation of more linear and calculated political curation.

Does this mean you will privilege text-based rather than image-based works of art, since words lend themselves more to inquiry and images lend themselves more to declaration. (I think that image-based works of art that purport to be inquiring rather than declarative are often weak ‘illustrations’ of inquiries that ought to be text-based. There is an awful lot of declarative work out there that purports to “question this or that” or “challenge this or that,” and most of it is just bad art. I believe this is one of the lingering by-products of Conceptual art).

JARVIS: Perhaps the privileging of either is also something to think about. I have a problem with thinking that the perception of the political in the work would be so clearly differentiated by the language used. The idea that text is a more political means of expression or at least can facilitate those expressions more effectively

is probably as restrictive to the interpretation of what is political as this qualitative account of the mediums.

GRISON: Are you also ‘declaring’ in this sentence that you will develop the theme of Dowsing for Failure based on the proposals you receive rather than having a clear idea of what you expect to accomplish in advance? Is this what you mean by the phrases “by-product” and “side effects”? If so, I will be inclined to skepticism.

HIEBERT: Our process is a combination of the extremes you mention. We have built-in a self-reflexive element to the process of curation we will be following, in the sense that we feel a need to open up the selection to a process of “dowsing” that many will find questionable. In terms of the specific phrase you cite (which deals with the *politics* of the exhibition), what we mean is we are skeptical of work with a political agenda for the simple reason that we are of the opinion that, in art, politics should grow obliquely out of the work itself rather than forming the central “declarative” locus of interpretation.

GRISON: Your sentence, “failure is not something that can – properly speaking – be cultivated” sounds almost oddly moralistic. However, I assume you refer to failure in the Newtonian sense – and I agree. However, cultivated failure is a common feature of human life and culture and what I’ll call natural failure as a normal aspect of the human condition. On the level of cultural matters, the history of the scientific, and non-scientific calibration of time is a history of failures. On the personal level, most attempts to receive or express love end in failure.

HIEBERT: I’m not clear what the “Newtonian” sense of failure is. I’m also not quite sure what you mean when you say that cultivated failure is a common feature of human life. Again, the failure that results from attempts at love (as you mention) are not properly seen as intentional – they occur, of course, and are failures precisely because they were not the outcome that was hoped for. From my perspective, the personal turmoil failures of this type can cause also means that they cannot be intended (self-sabotage, for instance, is a poor form of expressing one’s love for someone else). Further, the fact that failure can and does occur should not be viewed as a de-legitimation of the experience of failing. We tend, as a culture, to anaesthetize our failures as quickly as possible, which I think does an injustice to possibilities and perspectives that we may well not be otherwise able to encounter.

GRISON: When you refer to the intention to “make failure into the spectre of its own success, a self-fulfilling prophecy” you are describing a common human

attribute in the realm of self-imaging, interpersonal relationships and Machiavellian politics. However, are you referring to something that you see occurring in the realm of art practice?

JARVIS: I think that there is an interesting aspect to considering the practice of art as a terrain where the notion of failure is mobilized to pursue the manipulation of materials, ideas and interpretations. The theme of failure for an art show may have as much to do with putting on a gallery presentation than the fact that an art practice is a fertile zone of failed attempts. I think rather that it is this relationship specifically that we are wanting to address that using failure as a means of producing one's art may be likened to doing commercial work, or other types of production inspired by other means. It may be that by presenting this topic as a theme it gives one the chance to ponder the relationship between failure and one's art practice and hopefully be able to distinguish between the intended mobilization to amenable ends, and the acceptance of incommensurable results.

GRISON: Your explanation could have been written by a Symbolist poet (except for the word 'existential' of course). I assume you are referring to works of art that fail so badly that they are worthy of only the trash bin or fireplace. Am I right? A possibly appropriate example might be the occasional result of some 'accident' of 'miscalculation' in a potter's kiln, the results of which is utterly useless for its intended use – despite possibly still being an aesthetically successful object. (Of course my use of an example from the world of Craft is philosophically, politically and even existentially dangerous; however your reference to phoenixes and ashes led me to this particular example).

HIEBERT: Perhaps. Again, when the artist fails and the work succeeds there is often room for the resurrection of "interest." Your example points to this type of instance. It is much less interesting when the work fails and the artist nevertheless attempts to "turn" the work into a success of some sort.

GRISON: If I understand you correctly, I agree that there would be a paradox in making a work of art that is a representation of its own condition as a failure. Such a work of art would not be a failure if its representation was both practically and aesthetically successful. I thought this was something you wanted to avoid. As well, as a discourse on failure, would not such a work of art be an illustration of an idea better represented by text?

HIEBERT: You have exactly identified the problem we seek to avoid. The illustration of failure is not interesting. We know it happens, we fear it happening

to us, and yet we always know it will happen anyways. The rhetorical salvation of failure is equivalent to the illustration of failure. In both instances there is a safety zone constructed to protect oneself from the intensity of the experience itself. The two key words in the sentence you deconstruct are “paradox” and “renderings,” which allude not to the stand-alone representation, but to the act of engagement that necessarily occurs “despite” the failure itself. Put more simply, we are seeking works that represent failure without exiting from the failure of representation itself (this is the “paradox”).

GRISON: Does this mean that you are more interested in the condition or event that caused the failure than the resulting visual evidence of the failure? Would this condition or event need to be repeatable? Would this repeatability be the equivalent of the condition of extreme sports that you refer to? For example, I’m thinking of the place of gesture – as both condition and event – in the painting practice that Jackson Pollock developed as a kind of repetitive dance around and across his canvases. Am I correct to interpret your last sentence here as a possible reference to the notion that in the existential moment of his dance/gesture Pollock would not have been concerned with either the success or failure of either his process, his performance or the result?

HIEBERT: We are not scientists. Repeatability is an artistically useless concept – and it is only interesting in this way. Repetition (as in multiples, for example) is interesting for precisely the ways in which it fails to accurately repeat (think of photography or printmaking as opposed to the standardized multiples of the digital print). In terms of extreme sport, it is the adrenalin rush rather than the “goal” of winning that forms the locus of engagement. In this sense, your analogy to Pollock is apt – as long as we keep in mind that what (for him) might well have been an expressive moment of futility was immediately romanticized by the art world itself (in essence ruining his failure).

Think of the opening paragraphs of Dostoevsky’s *Notes from the Underground*, for instance:

I am a sick man. ... I am a spiteful man. I am an unattractive man. I believe my liver is diseased. However, I know nothing at all about my disease, and do not know for certain what ails me. I don’t consult a doctor for it, and never have, though I have a respect for medicine and doctors. Besides, I am extremely superstitious, sufficiently so to respect medicine, anyway (I am well-educated enough not to be superstitious, but I am superstitious). No, I refuse to consult a doctor from spite.

In this instance too, you would be correct to suggest that it is the “gesture” that informs the spirit of the work. And no greater travesty can be done to a work such as this than to call it a “successful” piece of literature. It is tragic. It is despicable. And yet, despite these obvious transgressions, it is seductive and compelling and terrifying.

GRISON: I’m not sure that I agree with the following:

Here, the stakes of making art in a contemporary world fully materialize as a project not of making meaning, but rather as strategies for dealing with the fact that there is none. No merit in meaning. No merit in success.

First, I’m not sure that the purpose of art is ever to make meaning – let alone within contemporary practice. Second, what evidence can you provide that making art is limited to “strategies for dealing with the fact that there is [no meaning]”? Further, if your claim that there is both no merit in meaning and no meaning in either failure or success in particular, then why do you limit this philosophic or existential paradigm to the contemporary world. I think that to be a correct observation of the human condition, which is the condition of art-making, the condition you describe must be applicable to all times and places.

JARVIS: I’m not sure if the statement necessarily implies that the purpose of art is to make meaning. Rather it implies that the pursuit of meaning can be confused with an intent to make art. If the intent of the art practitioner is simply to formulate a stance on a particular topic, or to render a calculated form, then does that project need to be contemplated as art? Could the same action not be realized as an attempt to articulate a stance in the world, making certain that particular coordinates are understood. I think that what the statement implies is that a work’s interest as art can come from its not being concerned with taking a stance, yet still working within the systems of language and materiality that can also be used to articulate meaning.

Art-making as the human condition is certainly a way of looking at it. I would rather allow the human condition to be a participant in the realm of art, but not tethered to its existence synonymous to its production. If we can’t at least imagine that art has somewhere to go beyond the confidence of a generalized human awareness, then how can that awareness be stretched to challenge its own existence?

GRISON: This part of your statement is especially tricky to me:

And consequently, no merit in failure proper, but rather in those methodologies invoked for mobilizing failure to some other end. And these are ends that (again) cannot be properly intended, but require rather a nuanced representational presence in order to tease out the latent possibilities of their inherently revolutionary form.

What do you mean by “methodologies.” What do you mean by “invoked for mobilizing failure to some other end”? Does this not turn failure into ‘happy accident’? How does one invoke a methodology for a particular end without intention? What would a “representation presence” mean in this situation, and why would the resultant work of art (if that’s what you mean) encompass an “inherently revolutionary form”?

JARVIS: Methodologies refer to the actions that take place in the process and production of work that are not necessarily intended, such as a plan, but those events that can contribute to the work by simple association. Not to belabour the idea of collaboration, but I think this use of methodologies is a way to attribute participation to things unintended yet still within the realm of being consciously implied. The way that one’s tools affect the outcome of a work simply by way of being that specific make or model.

GRISON: Can we speak to the “Curatorial Method” section of your “Call for Submissions”? Specifically the following:

Following the Call for Submissions for DOWSING FOR FAILURE, we will select a short-list of artists whose work offers possible strategies for the mobilization of failure. From this short list, the final artists to be exhibited will be chosen through a documented series of dowsing experiments in which dowsing rods will be used to divine the qualitative relationally of the proposal to the theme of failure. The process (obviously) is flawed, but necessary in order to ensure that the exhibition resists the calculated attempt to successfully represent failure, instead gravitating towards the circumstantial and contingent assessment of proposals as representative of a certain indefinable, yet nevertheless present, relationship to the theme

What do you mean by work that “offers possible strategies for the mobilization of failure”? How will you arrive at the short-list of participants? If this will be a human-based selection process, I think you might have a problem with intellectual subjectivity, which is to say, using a selection process that is neither rational nor

objective. For any other kind of exhibition I would not be so concerned about this selection process, but I think it essential that the curators share the dilemma of representing failure as they select the art for the show.

HIEBERT: It perhaps will suffice to say for the moment that it is the process of dowsing that ensures our own implication in the curation of the exhibition. In exactly the opposite way to how we are not scientists, we are also not spiritualists. A purely impartial methodology would only lend itself to rhetorical presentation – in this you are absolutely correct. It is the subjective infection of the process that ensures we ourselves will be implicated in the curatorial method. Likewise, a purely partial method (in which we simply selected the works we thought did best justice to the concept) would be fundamentally flawed in that it would excerpt us from the concept we seek to present. To this effect, we have chosen a paradoxical method in which we both do and do not have voices in the process of selection – we have opted to compile a short-list to ensure the integrity of the exhibition, and we have opted for dowsing to ensure that our own curatorial integrity will be compromised.

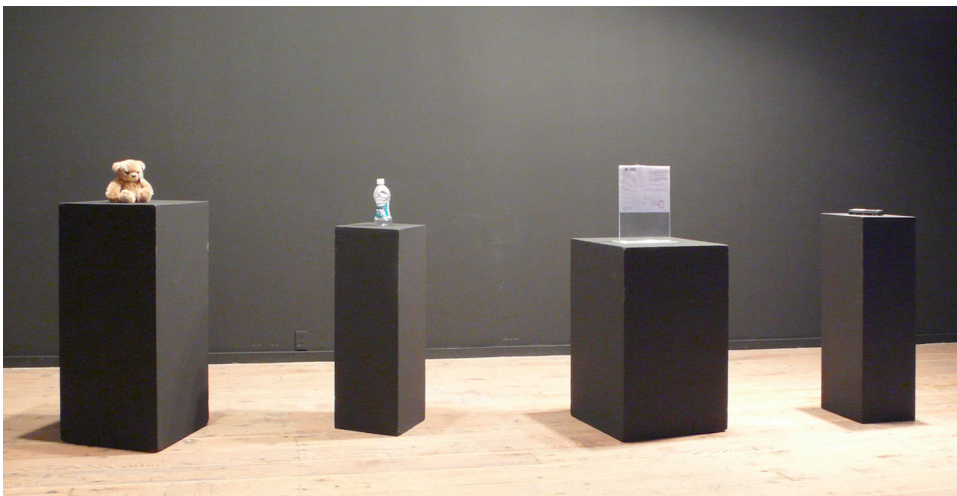
GRISON: I have a problem with the dowsing component of your selection process. First, it is difficult to avoid polluting the dowsing process with the effects of the observer/participant. You would need to do the dowsing in a manner that eliminates the human element in the decision-making process. Will you be doing this? Second, dowsing will include the element of ‘happy accident’ in the selection process, and I would think you would want to avoid this element of chance. I’d be more interested in the dowsing aspect of the selection process if the exhibition were either a discourse on Dadaist philosophy, politics or practice, or was a kind of research project in pataphysics. However you don’t mention either Dada or Pataphysics.

JARVIS: If we had stated that we were going to put out a call for submissions and then simply use the dowsing process to choose a number of works without creating a shortlist then I think the critique would be fair. However, we collaborated with the dowsing process to arrive at a final selection of what works would be in the show. The use of dowsing as a device or process with which to collectively assess the relationality of the proposals to the call was a decision on our part, as we constructed a methodology for the project. In terms of Pataphysics, since we are not scientists and therefore not interested in the reproducibility of this process, an aspect of the science of imaginary solutions is an apt reference. I think that our collaboration with the dowsing process helps to steer the concept of the show around a perceptual corner, without having to re-create a pathway or state an art historical precedent.

GRISON: I guess the last part of your Curatorial Statement is, in effect, a ‘weasel clause’ or a loophole that allows you to escape the presumed seriousness of your initial proposal. I think you could drive a philosophic truck through this loophole.

Consequently, DOWSING FOR FAILURE should be taken literally as a descriptive title and evocative declaration of the premise for the exhibit. We neither condone nor dismiss the potential of dowsing proper as an allowable or legitimate activity. Rather, here we are interested in methods for accumulating works of a certain sort that will fit within a certain parameter of meaning; one that might be seen as evocative rather than didactic, and which consequently requires an invocative method of selection rather than an explicit assessment of categorizable appearances.

HIEBERT: If you had said “weasel claws” you might have been closer. Remember that a loophole is also a descriptor for a noose. We are “dowsing for failure” not setting ourselves up for a failure of dowsing. You might drive a truck through it, but how will that truck be affected in the process, and who will be its roadkill? That’s the part we find interesting.



Above:
Dowsing for Failure: Installation View

Right:
“those are my happiest times... those trips to Vermont... alone and semi-secluded from the world at large... when we are finally able to escape the pressures of our everyday lives so that our relationship may briefly take it’s natural shape... no flawed or misordered kitchens, jackass co-workers or clients to dominate your conversations... and no last minute exhibitions, impromptu lectures and performances, or applications for jobs I don’t really want anyway to occupy mine... it’s in those short moments of relief where we are able to... just talk, you know... talk about our future together... about our present... about the direction and needs of just you and me.”

Water bottle drank from and sealed at 30,000 feet, regularly taken on return trips so as to temporarily expand to original shape at 30,000 feet. 2006.

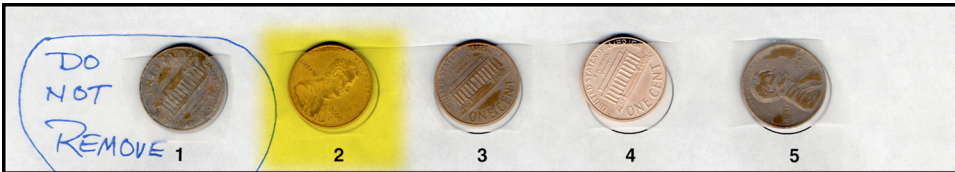


NATE LARSON



Above:
Dowsing for Failure: Installation View

Right:
Miracle Pennies (image #2)
Pigmented Inkjet Print: 18" x 12" (image size). 2006



-- THE KEY TO UNLOCK THESE BLESSINGS --

Take coin **Number 2** and throw it in a creek, lake, pond, river, aquarium anywhere where there are fish. (This is the 2nd wave of anointing for money to come to you. Jesus told Peter to catch a fish and it would bring money in its mouth to him.) Take coin **Number 3**, pour some oil, any kind of oil, in a small dish, bowl, bottle and place this coin in the oil. (The oil represents the Holy Spirit's New Anointing upon your money). Take coin **Number 4** and place it in your Bible in Isa. 26:3 (because you need PEACE before this release can come). Take coin **Number 5** place it in the SECRET PLACE where you keep your money. (Because this is where you want the 5th wave to multiply your money... you'll put money in and when you go back you'll find more than you placed in the SECRET PLACE to begin with). **YOU MUST, YOU MUST PLACE THE FIRST COIN ON THIS PAGE UNDER YOUR PILLOW TONIGHT ONLY...** (Because God gives us Anointed Ideas that bring money into our lives... and God is not only going to give you money making ideas but He will also fund those ideas and bring them to completion.) BUT I MUST HAVE THIS COIN BACK...

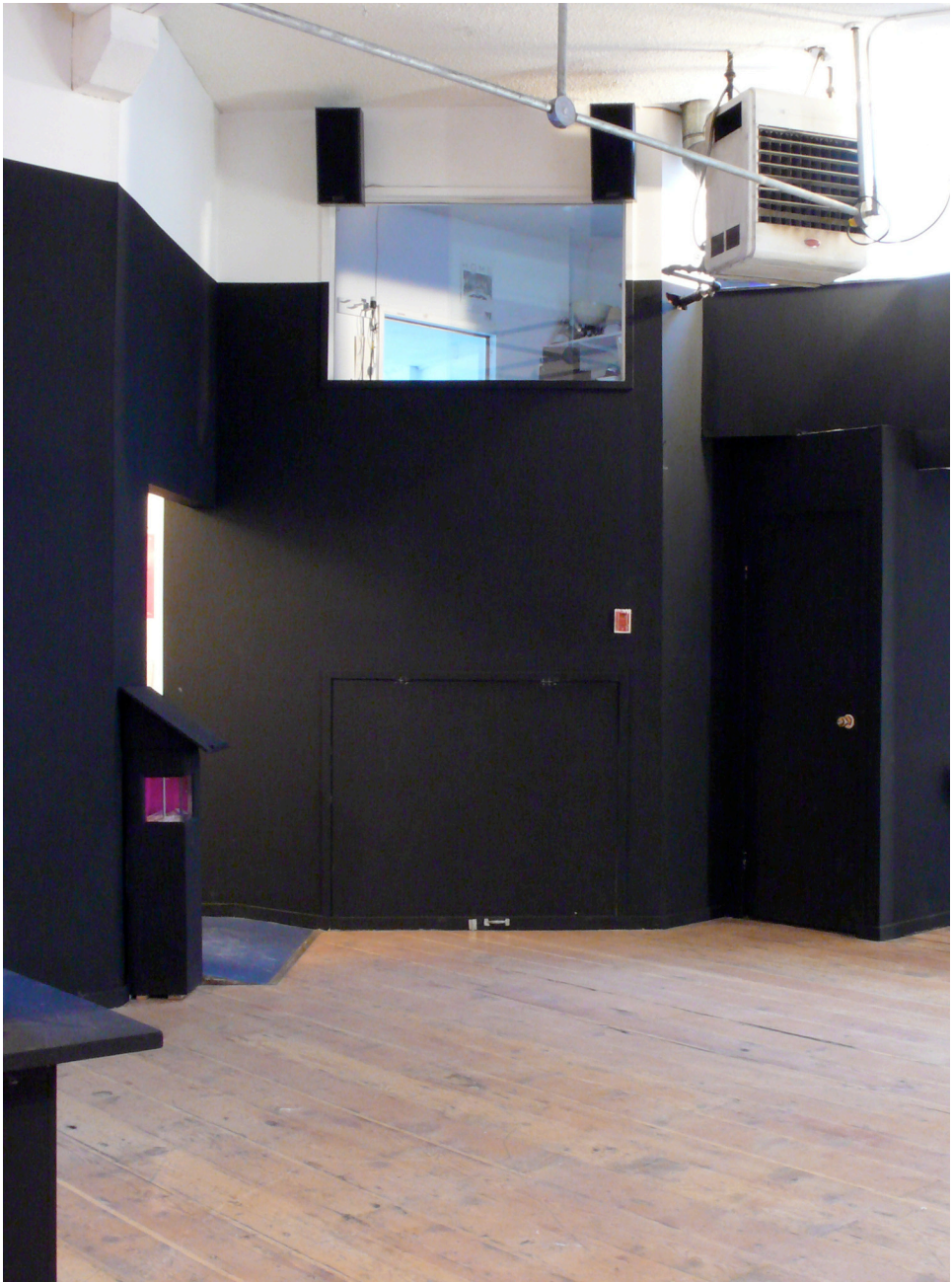




Above:
Dowsing for Failure: Installation View

Right:
In addition to one ten-foot, six-inch high non-reflective black band that more or less encompasses the principal space of display; six + n exhibition elements also painted non-reflective black.

Non-reflective latex paint. Approximately 10'6" x 220'. 2006 - 1981





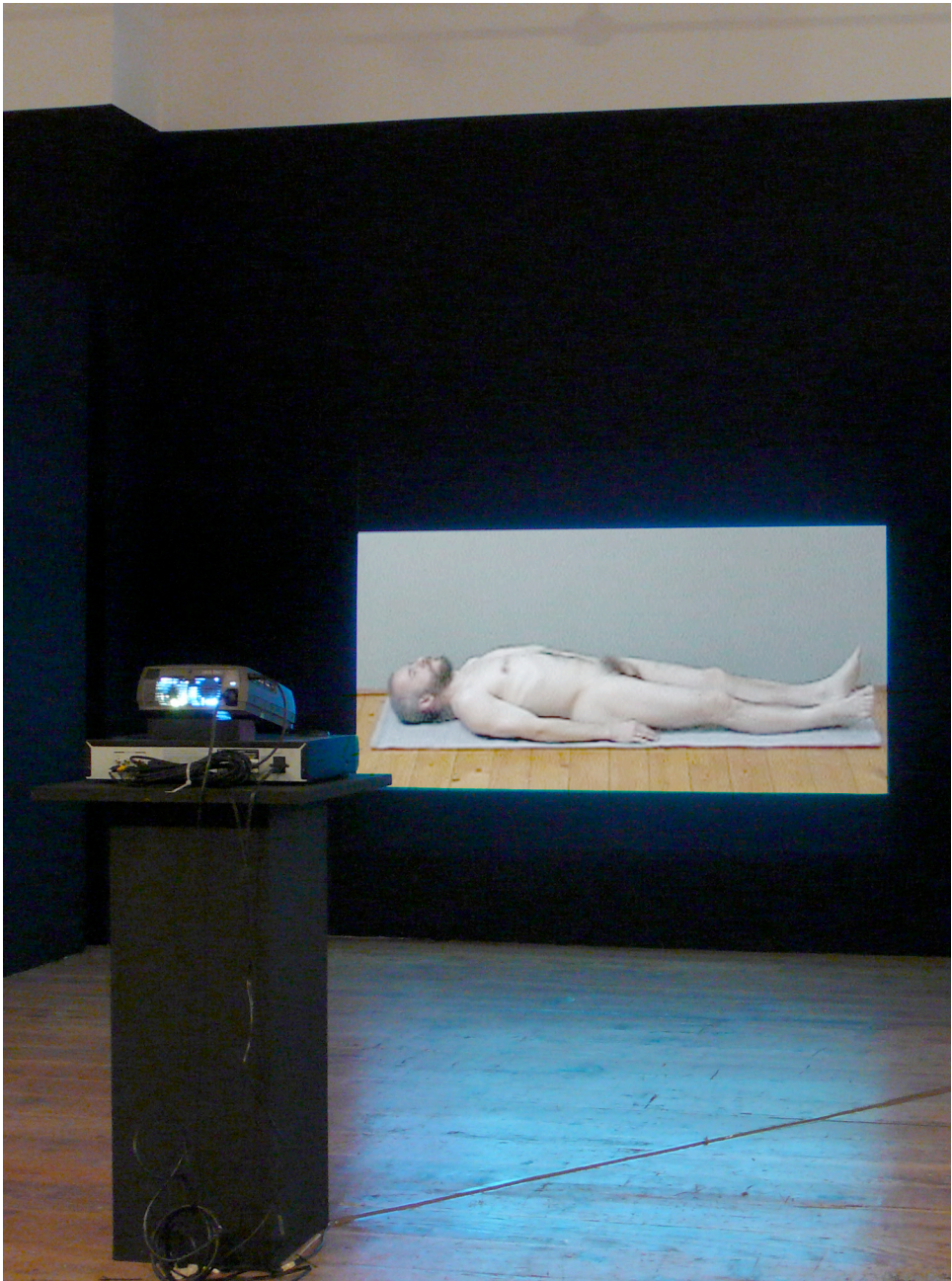
Above:

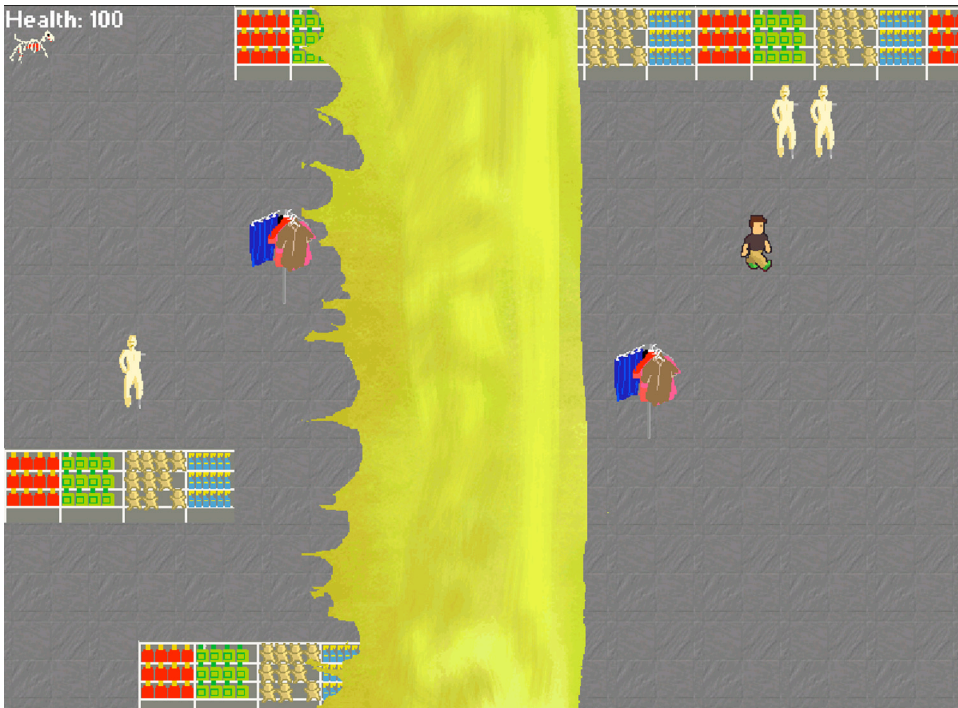
Immanence (Failed Attempt #3)

Video Projection: single-channel, stereo (55:17 loop). 2004

Right:

Dowsing for Failure: Installation View





Above:
Acid Spill (Video game screen shot)
Arcade cabinet: 6' x 2' x 2'. 2004

Right:
Dowsing for Failure: Installation View



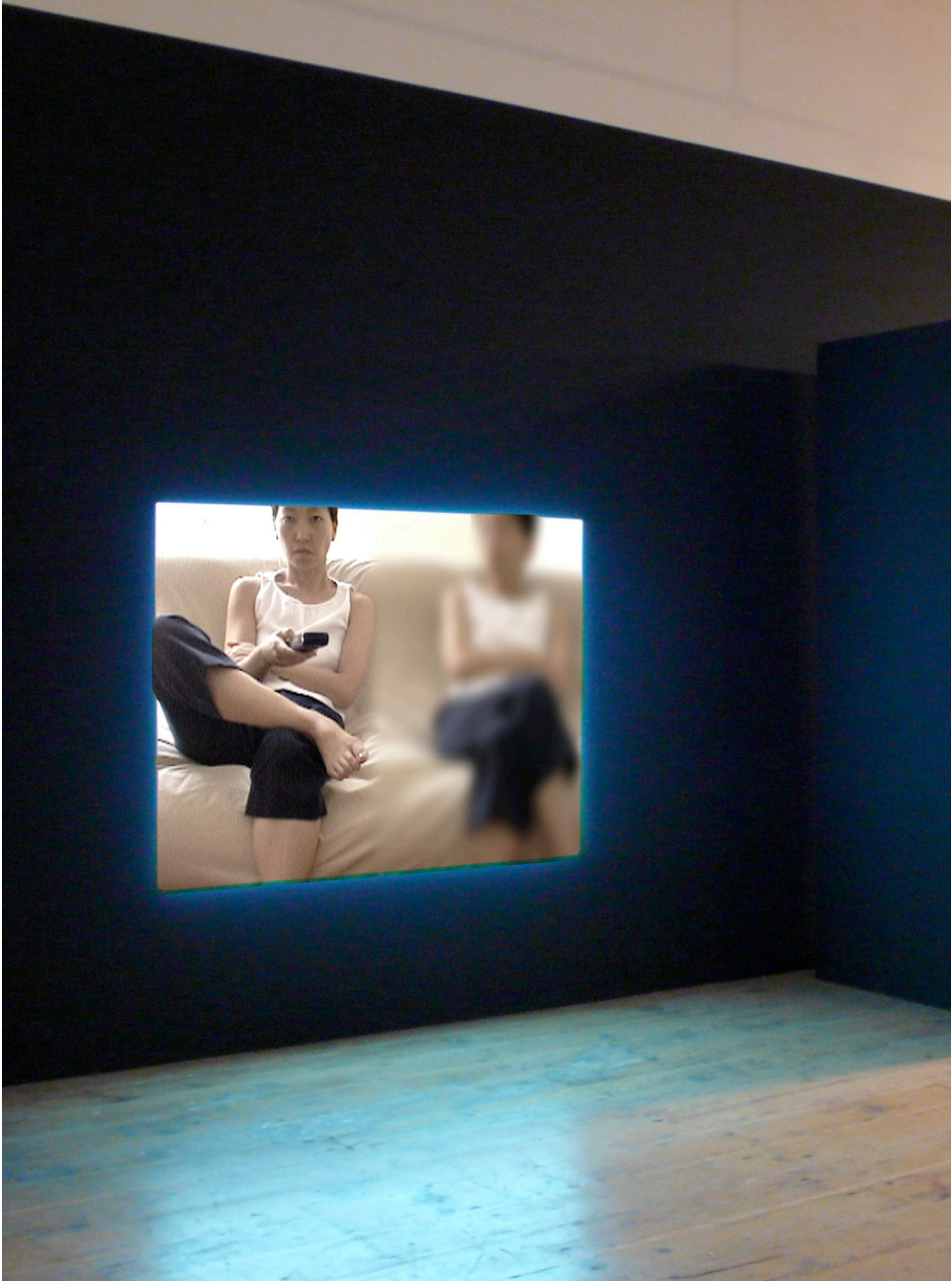


Above:

Double. Video Projection: single-channel, silent (1:20 loop). 2002

Right:

Dowsing for Failure: Installation View





Above:

Climbing to the Clouds (shot near Reykjavik, Iceland)

Video Projection: single-channel, stereo (5:00 loop). 2006

Right:

Dowsing for Failure: Installation View



Thinking in Hindsight

Ted Hiebert and Doug Jarvis in conversation

Does a failure to fail result in success, or is it not perhaps the other way around? The merry-go-round of failure is less merry and more rounded, one might suggest... or, at the very least, a trajectory of going is initiated such that the compounded merry-rounded results in a proverbial guessing-game of questions not yet bested, jestingly presented as a model of potentially interested engagement. Such is the nuance of collected gestures brought together in a loose reflection of dowsing for failure – a self-cancelled alienation brought about through alien collaboration with that which never pretended to have an opinion in the matter. This thought reflected backwards. This thinking in hindsight. Or, in the words of Antonin Artaud: “this possibility of thinking backwards and suddenly insulting one’s own thoughts.”

* * *

Dowsing for Failure, as a concept, is a moment of constellation of ideas on failure and possibility that we have been discussing over the course of the last several years. We have come to no conclusions. Instead, we have found potentially interesting conceptual trajectories, out of which Dowsing for Failure, as an exhibition, has emerged. In this sense, Dowsing for Failure can be taken as an excerpted moment in a larger trajectory of inquiry, an excerpt whose simple fact of representation cannot help but undermine the absence of identifiable answers – a nebulae of uncertainty, so to speak, which here takes identifiable and even assessable form.

It is in no way our interest to attempt a thematic summary of the works represented by Dowsing for Failure. Such a project would, ultimately, be futile for the simple reason that we cannot claim to have selected the final works in the exhibition.

Instead, Dowsing for Failure is a collaboration on a number of levels. First, Dowsing for Failure is a collaboration among our own differing perspectives on art, failure, uncertainty and interpretation – perspectives which have not been brought to a position of consensus but rather more provocatively have been allowed to remain in tension and disagreement during the course of both our conversations and our shared engagement with the project itself. Second, Dowsing for Failure

is a collaboration between ourselves and the dowsing rods used to select the participating artists, an engagement which both taints and mocks the curatorial license and attributions that we have used to frame the exhibition. Finally, Dowsing for Failure is a collaboration with the artists themselves, each of whom has contributed works which expand, diffuse, emphasize and/or negate certain aspects of our own conceptual interests.

In this sense, Dowsing for Failure is neither properly speaking an exhibition nor an event – not a curatorial project but also not a project left to the whims of chance or fancy. Instead, it is an instance of what might be called calculated disparity – a stage upon which questions without answers are left to provoke their own forms of interest and dismissal, engagement and refusal, uncertainty and clarity, always under the persistent sign of works and ideas left unfinished but not abandoned. And it is here, under the sign of the historical non-finito that the task remains of formalizing some semblance of finitude to what has none.

To this end, we have opted to not compose a curatorial statement that might seem to render static that whose merit is precisely its refusal of staticity, to not summarize and abstract from the various faces of represented failure present in this exhibition but to rather engage, as we have all along, with the intricacies of the ideas themselves, without fear or hope of reaching a consensual manifesto on the nature of failure today. This might be called cowardice by some, laziness by others, irresponsible by those who would prefer to have us think the questions through on their behalf. Call it what you wish, and take care of what you wish for, for here the circular deferral of failure-come-represented cannot help but bestow on us all the imperative of interpretive error itself. Ultimately, our perspective is that it is of far less interest to conclude when we have in front of us such provocative instances for speculative questioning. What follows is one such period of questioning, rendered here as an instance of engagement, from our flawed and uncertain perspectives, as a curatorial dialogue on the interstices of interest provoked by Dowsing for Failure.

* * *

JARVIS: Well Ted, we have managed to get the show up and running and I have to admit that I like what we have pulled off. It has been an interesting process. Conceptualizing the *Dowsing for Failure* theme and fitting it with a call for submissions and selection process that we would find engaging was a challenge in itself.

I remember thinking before we put out the call for submissions that the project would probably take a bit of energy on our parts to get the concept across to others and get the general support of the gallery to put on the show. I didn't realize at the time that we would subject ourselves to such a rigorous engagement with the submissions, the dowsing process and the set-up of the gallery space. Not to mention the patience required to deal with failure as the basis for a gallery show. I think this is the part that has surprised me the most, the barrage of literal perceptions on failure and its dialectic counterpart, success.

HIEBERT: Indeed, I share your sentiment and confusion on the various interpretive failures that would literalize the exhibit while seeking to render success where there is none. This is likely the least interesting way to view the concept of failure, and equally uninteresting as a thematic summary of the show.

JARVIS: The double spin of using a divination method to seek the presence of failure from a pile of submissions seemed like a set-up to begin with. I must admit that to think about that aspect alone is enough to cause a perceptual tailspin. Chasing the tail of artists' intent in circles of proposal rhetoric was the first indication that what we were conjuring was not going to be straightforward. Personally, this was a comforting measure, what it meant for discussions with colleagues and peers was a little less clear.

HIEBERT: I think what is perhaps too easy to forget is that we have been implicated in the gesture of the exhibition itself by virtue of the dowsing process we employed. It is, of course, a cop-out on our part, but one that was both necessary and appropriate given the circumstances. To defer our own interpretive license to the dowsing rods means that we can't really take credit for the way in which the show has come together – something which is understandably frustrating to anyone who seeks a unified assertion or conceptual insistence on our part. To put words in the mouth of the dowsing rods seems to be an unacceptable personification, with the one caveat that we have of course already personified the process itself by virtue of our own engagement. The tailspin, as you call it, allows for many possible spins, all spiraling into a plummeting Icarian imagination.

Gordon Lebrecht

HIEBERT: One might look, for instance, at Gordon Lebrecht's work as perhaps both the most dominant and the most invisible piece in the exhibition itself. At its simplest, one might posit a simple reversal of the standard "white cube" along the

lines perhaps of a black non-cube, a void that is also a voided space, or perhaps a virus for which there is no real vaccine.

JARVIS: His piece has an all-encompassing presence within the display space. It actually turned out to be an interesting conceptual and aesthetic basis for the show. His submission was pedantic with the proposal for the show written as one line amidst three pages of text. His piece has a significant presence; it can come across as a design element, which I like. It is easy to forget that Gordon's work was a proposal; the convention of painting gallery walls black can be easily dismissed. His flip of the white cube, as you say, was a significant element early on.

HIEBERT: Yes, the proposal is seemingly important here, since the piece was conceptual and unrealized, one might wonder how suddenly day turned into night in the gallery itself, the vampiric horizon for placement of all other works. I'm reminded in this context of Albert Camus' assertions about the screaming sounds of existential silence, the innocuous presence of absence which, even early on, seemed central to the work itself.

JARVIS: The black painted walls have provided a popular departure point for entry into the show. Lebrecht's work helped steer collaboration with the other works as we figured out ways to present them without inhibiting his from existence. The 10'6" black band around the gallery was not interrupted by the other works, but augmented. Paradoxically, his piece is freed from compromise by the other works, helping to achieve the conundrum of the work being present and absent simultaneously.

HIEBERT: It is curious, in this sense, that he has titled his piece *In addition to...* when it is perhaps more explicitly a subtraction: a subtracted expectation or a voided addition of sorts. In this context it also seems relevant that Lebrecht's work seems to be as much a frame for the other works as a piece in its own right – the doubled reversal you mention seems to suggest that the other works in the exhibition also take on the properties of frames for his. I like this double-speak, it loudly declares its own invisibility, which of course also has the doubled effect of rendering into perception the darkness that is, ultimately, imperceptible. It's as if the Modernist myth of minimal decision here takes negative form. In this sense one might even suggest that Lebrecht's piece, rather than an addition or a decision, might be better seen as an indecision: the negative choice is perhaps interchangeable with the choosing of negative space.

Anthony Schrag

JARVIS: Anthony is trying to balance on the ladder, and he falls. It is very easy to relate this physical activity to the success and failure of a balancing act. Does this have to be constituted as failure, or is he achieving what he intends, shifting his weight up and down the ladder with gravity, only to then do it again? Also, the fact that this is an edited video work does leave it open to a manipulative play of intentions. The artist not being able to balance on the ladder is maybe not the point, but with the narrative of try and try again he enters into a dialogue with the viewer. It makes me wonder what it seems like he is trying to do? Romantically, he may be trying to reach the sky, which is different from trying to balance successfully on a ladder. I am curious why he looks up towards the sky. What could he be looking at? This is where the work gets situated in a perspectival narrative.

HIEBERT: A comment was made at the opening of the exhibition that Schrag's work has a sort of Sisyphean overtone, which I think is worth exploring. I would be tempted to disagree with such a sentiment, for the simple reason that there is no real period of rest in the playfulness of the piece. His is not an eternally futile punishment, but, from my perspective, a game of deferral whose sole purpose is to ask that seemingly innocent question of "why not?" and then to proceed despite the seeming impossibility of realization. Is this ladder the "corporate ladder" or the escape hatch for those who might be bored with the day-to-day? In a sense I'm not sure that it's either, since the piece (despite its title: *Climbing to the Clouds*) seems actually to have more to do with creative ways of falling. Here, effort is deployed in a rather uniform and repetitive way in order to allow for exactly the possibilities of falling differently, at times backwards and in slow motion, but at others with potentially painful repercussions. This "risk," so to speak, seems to be that upon which both the triviality and the seriousness of the piece itself rest.

Of course, your comments on balance have much to say about all this as well, since it is the failure to balance that results in the dynamism of the projection. To be literal about it would be to say that effort itself is unbalancing – to try to achieve that which one knows one can is a boring and useless endeavor. Instead, Schrag has articulated that fateful side of living where only those achievements that are impractical or impossible are actually worth coveting. One must retain some semblance of playfulness in attempting the impossible.

Benjamin Bellas

JARVIS: Benjamin's work was the only one within the context of the show that played with the logistics of presence, leaving the option open to be literally judged as failing to meet a certain criteria, namely, arriving on time.

HIEBERT: Yes, Bellas' work has a nice story attached to it, particularly since it emphasizes the triviality of literalizing failure that we find so distasteful. That his work did not arrive in time for the opening meant that we had to adapt, collaborate in the unlikely and undesirable after-effects of last-minute panic. This wasn't really a failure but a communicative oversight, for which Bellas himself bears no blame. Nevertheless, he rose to the challenge, creating a spontaneous object out of the events themselves. One would be a fool to call this a "happy accident" and yet there is something of interest in that which was neither happy nor accidental. In this sense, despite the fact that Bellas' work is the most material of any included in the show, it is also the most hypothetical, always implying the stories behind the objects themselves. And, inevitably, he could have made it all up. Was the water bottle really opened at 30,000 feet and, if so, why did the cabin pressure not serve to adapt the piece to its context? Is the hard drive really filled with resentment? Perhaps, but in either instance one ruins his work by over-literalizing the facts when it is instead the suspended literality of his objects that carries such poignancy.

JARVIS: His work also highlights the fact that decisions are made in the creation and presentation of work. We made choices throughout the installation of the show, stressing the fact that we were present agents who would not necessarily go away. This presence on our part is highlighted by our collaboration with the dowsing rods. How our involvement can be perceived reflects another way of holding question in play.

HIEBERT: I suppose that's true enough. The nuance, however, has to do with the immediacy of presence, and not simply with the choices made. That's what separates involvement from design, an aspect of Bellas' work that seems very explicit. And while not mutually exclusive in any real sense, these objects do not read as design elements, but as indebted to a personal history of sorts, even without considering his elaborate story-based titles. What each of his pieces has in common is that they are used objects, objects that declare their own history of use, misuse or intervention. In a way one might even suggest that the stories distract from this immediacy of the object, each of which seems to have its own story that has little to do with the title given to it. There is a play in these works which is not so much about humanizing the inanimate as it is about dehumanizing

personal narrative in favour of the immediacy – one might even say the novelty – of use.

June Pak

JARVIS: June's video piece, compared to the other works in the show, seems to be the most pre-meditated in its construction. Watching the video makes me wonder whether she scripted the sequence beforehand or if she filmed each segment and then found a lucky poetic fit. I suppose it doesn't matter how the video was created, however it does make me curious of her creative process. How does the way that she approaches her work suggest a concept being realized, or a process being explored?

HIEBERT: It really could go either way, couldn't it? Personally, I prefer to read this work as exploratory rather than illustrative, teasing out possible modes of self-interaction and self-intervention. Given the calculated nature of the video, one might almost say that any look at oneself must somehow participate in a dialogue of equal contrivance. This pre-meditation that you note might well be some sort of psychological fail-safe, allowing for the external presentation of what amounts to an internal dialogue. What seems to carry this piece are those moments where the two Junes exchange glances, noticing or accusing the self-to-self interference that might be called characteristic of contemporary living.

JARVIS: Yes, the character(s) within this piece highlight a pattern among the different works in the show: the artists presenting themselves in their work. June's video renders a tension between the characters of her self. I am curious how the notion of tension becomes evident in different works in the show. Do you think that tension is an inherent ingredient for notions of failure?

HIEBERT: I agree that the works in the show have a common theme of tension, of one sort or another, but I'd also reiterate that these tensions do not take the same forms across the works of different artists. With Pak's work, I think that while the characters are themselves in tension, the larger trajectory of the piece suggests that, in fact, it is the duality of the figures that is entered into tension with our presuppositions that individuals have only one personality, one character, one body. I don't read this piece as metaphorical. Instead I read it the same way I read my own face in the mirror each morning – a moment of articulated polyphony that, when divided, always suggests a third body. Despite the fact that this piece is titled *Double* it seems there is a definite trinity in play, a meta-script of one sort or

another where it is precisely the lived frustration of a multiple self that emerges as the suggestion that we are not perhaps as unified as we might think.

JARVIS: The triangulation of characters, the suggestion of a third body, references aspects of our own involvement in collaboration with the dowsing process. The process that you and I both engaged allows the agency of the dowsing rods to come into play. The notion that we cannot claim full responsibility for the final selection of artists is supported as much by the personification of a dowsing collaborator as it is by the doubt levelled towards the processes of divination.

Daniel Olson

JARVIS: I overheard a comment at the opening that Daniel's video was considered a "one liner." Aside from being a funny comment on this piece, it made me think about the levels of interpretation that can be projected back onto the works in the show. It is funny how the horizontality of the figure, as well as its stillness, can elicit such minimal interpretation. From a certain perspective one could say that it is perhaps the most provocative image in the show: an adult male lying prostrate with the suggested intention of achieving an erection. What I like to imagine is that this piece is a smokescreen for a 55 minute tantric video in which the artist is really not very interested in what the viewer thinks he is doing. He is, perhaps, merely exploring a myriad of personal manifestation exercises, under the auspices of a façade of creative production.

HIEBERT: Indeed, as with many of the works in this exhibition, Olson's piece relies on the faith of the viewer to uphold the status of the represented event. Interestingly, his piece also resists giving the viewer enough information to know exactly what is happening. The meditative connotations are, in this context, explicit in the piece itself. That one could appear as meditating when one is actually trying to get an erection has much to say about the taboos and interpretive expectations brought to the work by the viewer. This is not made more clear, but rather more ambiguous by the title, *Immanence* which seems to refer not to a desired objective, but rather to the very process itself. The title and the stated activity are, in this sense, in opposition with one another. How, in other words, does one fail at immanence?

I also quite like the cross-overs between Olson's "failed" phallus and other such devices in the exhibit. You and I have talked about the relation between Olson's work and Schrag's, wherein the phallus takes on quite a different connotation, and with Pak's piece as well. Interestingly, this same line of thought could be levelled

back at us too, through the phallic interventions of the dowsing rods.

JARVIS: Yes, I think the phallus is funny. It is kind of a stupid reference, but that is what makes me laugh. We have not put up a sign suggesting that obvious referents are wrong, just that they are not the only things going on. In terms of the dowsing rods as a flaccid illustration of our own ability to participate in the selection process, well it's a rather rhetorical observation, isn't it?

However, Daniel's *Attempt Number 3* is not so obvious. Meditation, transcendence, sunning at a nudist colony? He was specific about situating the projection in the downward perceptual zone of the viewer in the gallery space. The duration of the work also helps the viewer to forget what he is trying to do. He has constructed a situation that allows for some interesting double guessing as to who is watching whom. This aspect helps to highlight an interaction between the works in the show and the audience.

Mike Paget

HIEBERT: Paget's work, I think, reiterates in new key many of the thoughts we've been discussing about works by Olson, Schrag and Pak. Here, it is not the personal interaction of the artist that is front and central, but the interaction between the viewers and the works. One might, for instance, rename *Acid Spill* as "failed attempt number n," in a sort of combination of Olson's *Failed Attempt* and Lebrecht's *6 + n elements*. The running total of "n" would have much to say about the extent to which viewers are willing to interact with the frustration of playing an always losing game. How many times can one jump out of a plane without a parachute? How many times might one run away from a tidal wave of acid? This is not unlike the simple process of living – how many times must one get up in the morning, for instance – but is accentuated in this context by reinforcing the banality and absurdity of allowable behaviors.

JARVIS: Mike's video game consoles incorporate hand-operated devices to maneuver and manipulate what is going on. Obviously they are interactive and, one could say, require or inspire the viewer to participate. But you are right in that they do put the control of futility in the hands of the audience. I enjoyed finding the loophole in the one game; to cheat death, to stay alive for me both foiled the piece and allowed me to fool myself with an attitude of conquest – short-lived of course. It sets up the idea that this work fails to achieve immediate demise. You still die, it's just not as dramatic a death. You have to fade out – a more humble demise.

These works also involve a literal tactility, along with Benjamin's teddy bear, which speaks when held. They need to be touched. Does this suggest an ergonomics of art and audience interaction?

HIEBERT: If we could use the term "anti-ergonomics" I think you might be onto something here. Instead of the adaptive architecture that facilitates easy living, Paget's work does the opposite. These consoles are, of course, familiar objects to most of us – objects which we already know how to interact with. Except, in this instance, the conceptual ergonomics of the games frustrate our expectations. In other words, it's not so much the viewer that plays these games, but the games that explicitly play those people who interact with them. I find myself in an odd place interacting with these games, unsure of whether I am angry at not being allowed to win or fascinated by the duration – however short – of the engagement itself. If one looks for meaning in this work, one will find nothing. If one, on the other hand, simply wants to play, there are potentially hours of obsessive entertainment awaiting to be engaged with. The trick is, of course, that one is always playing on the terms of the game itself. The interactivity is a hoax, but the interaction isn't. It's a pleasant paradox.

Nate Larson

JARVIS: During the exhibition I had the opportunity to talk with my mother about Nate's work. We discussed how individuals following the process might perceive related events at every turn, affirming their belief and highlighting their relationship to the notion of faith. It is also playing with a religious marketing scam, one that could be considered false from the start. However it does take into account how each individual negotiates a belief system. Whether imagination, contradiction, or just the notion of meaning itself, that Nate has chosen this device as inspiration for his work does play with the suspension of belief and its familiarity in contemporary life. I am curious if the majority of people who engage in these scams aren't also hoping for a bit of amusement as much as being enveloped in the divination and engagement of ritual.

HIEBERT: You might be right, but I'm sure we could never admit to it. What I like about Larson's work is that it bears a very strong affinity to our own curatorial process. It becomes difficult to say whether his engagement is sincere or contrived – all that one can say with conviction is that his belief was sufficient to go through with making the work. Between the very calculated aesthetics of presentation

and the highlighting of those important aspects of the *Miracle Pennies* instruction manual, Larson has polarized the debate such that it could go either way. In this context, we perhaps do an injustice to the work if we read it as an insincere commentary on an already dubious ritual. Instead, I'm tempted to argue for a sort of idealist cynicism that holds itself firmly to the process required while never explicitly believing in the desired outcome. In this way, while it may not be a disbelief proper that is suspended in its contemplation, it is at the very least a sincere performance that is contemplated despite the question of belief or doubt.

JARVIS: Engagement within the work does give the interpretive process something to hang onto. Maybe we can assume that the intent of the marketer is a perspective that is perhaps as calculated as the one Nate deploys in the construction of this work. The sincerity of Nate's attempt, the way that he executes the work with an attention to detail as prescribed by the instructions, does direct the question back towards the viewer. The marketer is already convicted of playing a trick, a marketing scam. Nate's work presents a diagram of the process, a documentation of how one may go about filling out the form letter. The audience is left to query the cause and effect of whether this process is going to achieve something beyond the literal observation of deception and obedience. It is curious how this brings us back to our involvement with the show.

Concluding Remarks

JARVIS: Bringing all of these artists work together for this show has brought up some interesting curiosities for me: the notion of failure as the theme for an art show as well as how a theme participates amongst all of the variables involved.

I recognize that our intent was not to put together a survey show displaying our specific take on failure. However, I am caught in the non-intent of interacting with the notion of failure as a dynamic within creative production and interpretive observation. As we have discussed, it has been interesting to see how and where different literalizations rear their heads, and where they go from there. Do they sit static, holding ground for all they are worth? Or, do they emerge into perception and continue with the flow of interpretive participation and poetic realization? For me, failure has become just another part of the overall configuration of the show, another participant in a series of moments, instances without intent, experiences without end. I suppose one question has become of interest to me beyond others and that is, how does the show situate the viewer in the question of failure?

The works that ended up being in the show are vague enough to not give a clear declaration on the theme and, as we have discussed, we were intent on this. That being said, there seemed to be an initial tendency of viewers to want to calculate the relationship between the works, their success, and their appropriateness to the theme. Ok, that's fair. I wouldn't want to impose restrictions on the viewer any more than we wanted to avoid summarizing failure as a theme.

What has made a significant impact on me is that things can be held at bay, in relationship to one another without a contrived meaning to be shared by the context and situation that they are suspended in. Through a series of different discussions ranging from ridiculous rants on the protrusion of artifice, to the absurd declaration that there is no meaning in life, we have woven a terrain of points and projects that have managed to stay in play. This says as much about the popularity of failure in contemporary society as it does about the interface of presentation and observation within an art context. This process has had its moments and I am happy to have been a participant in some of them.

HIEBERT: All things considered, I can say that I am pleased with the way this exhibition has come together. As a whole, I'm not sure that there is any overarching unification of concept in play, which is good since we sort of wanted to avoid that kind of thing. Instead, what I find interesting is the way in which the exhibition functions as a whole, with each artist's work entered into a dialogue of some sort with those around them. That the works all hold their own does not mean that there isn't a conversation taking place, one that – from my perspective – reiterates many possible ways of looking at, considering and engaging with ideas that might be outlandish, might be destined to fail, but which nevertheless provide both an entertaining articulation of self-reflexive representation on the part of the artists, and a compelling survey of possible trajectories of failure in the contemporary world of art.

In the end, the exhibition begins and ends with darkness – the darkness of *In addition to*... but also the darkness of uncertainty, of indecision, of contemplation and speculation, of questions without answers or those with many possible ways of looking. The framing of the exhibition is, as the framing of life, a place where possibilities, fantasies and nightmares roam and proliferate... dowsing, in the end, for failure.

Contributor Biographies

In utilizing the mediums of performance, video and sculpture, Chicago artist **Benjamin Bellas** creates provocative relationships that explore issues of balance, of the power dynamics that exist between people, the struggles of growth, and the simply absurd workings of the human psyche through work that is both highly personal and weirdly socially relevant. Bellas takes things that have their own existence and changes them only slightly, adding to or altering them for his own purposes. Bellas has been quoted in this regard as having said *“Everything I’ve ever thought about myself has already been said by someone else... about themselves.”*

Nate Larson is a Chicago-based artist and photographer. His photographic work has been exhibited extensively across the US and has been featured internationally in shows in Canada, Greece, and the UK. His work has been written about in numerous publications, including the New York Times. His photoworks and artist books are included in the collections of the Center for Photography at Woodstock, the Banff Centre in Alberta, the Midwest Photographers Project Collection at the Museum of Contemporary Photography Chicago, and McHenry County College, among others. His artwork has received grant support from the City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency. Larson earned an MFA from Ohio State University and a BA from Purdue University. He holds a tenured teaching appointment at Elgin Community College in Illinois. More information & images are available at www.natelarson.com

Gordon Lebrecht is an artist and writer living in Toronto. Past exhibitions have included *By the Numbers: painting)programme(photography*, a recent survey of works from the 1970s at Gallery One One One, School of Art, The University of Manitoba, (2005-06) and *Ten Points for YYZ—now | 1989–2004* at YYZ Artists Outlet (2005), Toronto. Recent writings include “Stan Douglas: Living the Drive” (*Parachute* 103, 2001), “~~Janice Gurney~~: a presentation to come” (*Parachute* 109, 2003), and “Becoming Imperceptible: Robin Peck’s ‘Zones of Indiscernibility’” (*Espace* 77, 2006).

Born in California to Canadian parents in 1955, **Daniel Olson** completed degrees in mathematics and architecture before obtaining a Bachelor of Fine Arts in 1986 from the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (Halifax) and a Master of Fine Arts in 1995 from York University (Toronto). Olson’s work – which includes sculpture, multiples, installation, photography, performance, audio, video and artist’s books

– has been exhibited widely, including shows at the Contemporary Art Gallery (Vancouver), the Art Gallery of Ontario (Toronto), the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec (Québec), Galerie Optica (Montréal), and the Canadian Cultural Centre (Paris). His works is documented in several catalogues, including *Playtime* (Regina, 2006), *Twenty Minutes' Sleep* (Vancouver, 2005), *Silence and Other Conditions* (Kingston, 2005), *Vicious Circle* (Chatham/Medicine Hat/Brandon, 2003), *Bang* (Paris/Toronto, 2002), *Small World* (Cambridge/Lethbridge/Sackville, 2000), *Noisemaker[s]* (Toronto, 1999) and *Waste Management* (Toronto, 1999). Olson has published numerous artist's books and multiples, most of which have been available at Art Metropole in Toronto, where he is also represented by Birch Libralato. Since 2001 Olson has been living and working in Montreal.

Mike Paget is an artist, cook and video technician based out of Calgary. He has been creating game based art works since 2003. He has exhibited throughout Alberta as well as in group exhibitions in Chicago and Brisbane (Australia). As a cook at the River Café, Calgary, he has cooked for both Governor Generals, Samuel L. Jackson and Jason Priestley. He received a B.F.A. from the University of Calgary in 2002. More information can be found at his website <http://www.plague.ca>

June Pak is a visual artist who works closely with time-based and digital media. While her work utilizes the technological means, her subject matter deals with the human-ness in the multiple/fragmented existence of the Self. Her single-channel video "double" has shown widely at festivals and screenings in Canada, the United States, the UK, The Netherlands and Germany. Her video installations have exhibited around Canada and Italy: *Untitled* (Milan, IT, 2005), *Aesthetics of Resistance* (Como, IT, 2005), *Khyber Centre for the Arts* (Halifax, CA, 2004), *Truck Gallery* (Calgary, CA, 2004), *Gallery 44* (Toronto, CA, 2002), *Media City 8* (Windsor, CA, 2002). In 2004, she received K.M. Hunter Artist Award in Visual Arts, which acknowledges the emerging talents in the arts. She teaches Time-Based Media and Interdisciplinary Studio courses at the University of Western Ontario in London and Ontario College of Art & Design in Toronto.

Anthony Schrag was born in Zimbabwe and grew up in the Middle East, the UK and Canada. He originally obtained a BFA in Creative Writing from U.B.C., Vancouver where, during his last year of study, the award winning GreenBoatHouse Books published his poetry book 'Moving Pictures', and where his novel was a semi-finalist in the Robertson Davis/Chapters First Novel Competition. Schrag later dropped his writerly façade for his true passion and studied at Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design in Vancouver. This eventually led to an MFA from the Glasgow

School of Art. Schrag has exhibited/performed in Vancouver, Budapest, New York, Mexico City, Beijing, Norway as well as across the UK and Ireland and recently completed several Artist Residencies in Iceland. He is not interested in making art that doesn't make him laugh at least once.

Brian Grison is a visual artist, writer and drawing instructor. His art has been exhibited nationally and internationally in public and artist-run galleries. A selection of public collections with his work are the Art Gallery of Ontario, the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, Art Bank and the Surrey Art Gallery. He has taught at universities and colleges in Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia. Since completing a Masters degree in Art History at Carleton University, Ottawa, in 2003, Grison has been publishing exhibition reviews and essays in local and national art magazine and journals. Currently he lives in Victoria where he writes a monthly column for *Focus Magazine*. Articles by him will appear in upcoming issues of *RACAR* and *Canadian Art*.

Ted Hiebert is a Canadian visual artist and theorist. His visual works have been exhibited across Canada in public galleries and artist-run centres, and in group exhibitions internationally. His published writings have appeared in *Technoetic Arts*, *Performance Research* and *CTheory*, among others. Hiebert is the Editorial Assistant for *CTheory* journal, a Research Assistant at the Pacific Center for Technology and Culture and a Ph.D. Candidate in the Humanities Doctoral Program at Concordia University. <http://www.tedhiebert.net>

Doug Jarvis is an interdisciplinary artist and curator living in Victoria. <http://www.dougjarvis.ca>



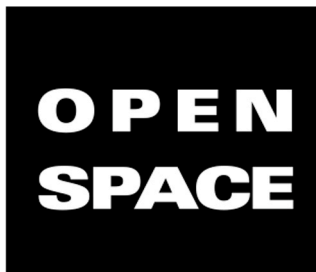
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