



PHOTO: TONY BOUNSALL

Ted Hiebert with “Thelma Moss. The Probability of the Impossible: Scientific Discoveries and Explorations in the Psychic World (New York: Plume, 1974) pp. 23-24.”

**March 7-April 7**  
**TED HIEBERT & AURORA TEXTUALIS**  
Deluge Contemporary Art

NOW, HERE IS SOMETHING DIFFERENT, and perhaps another example of contemporary creativity overturning assumptions about art.

Ted Hiebert, perhaps less an artist than a philosopher and scientist, is exhibiting Kirlian photographs of the auras of his favourite books at Deluge Contemporary Art. These photographs demonstrate that as books accumulate personal history, they develop auras that embody the physical touch (perhaps representing the intellectual/emotional touch) of all their readers.

This is a lovely notion. It’s the same as the idea that any physical object we treasure and use every day absorbs and reflects back the energy of our relationship with it. Whether or not this is actually true is irrelevant. Hiebert’s strange science directly reflects the poetic humour of his philosophic relationship with life and the world.

One would naturally want to know the origins of Hiebert’s quirky philosophy and scientific research. It is no doubt significant that he grew up in a scholarly household in Edmonton. His mother, now retired, was a grade-school principal, a career that certainly balances the subtle relationship between

hard facts (such as, “Ted, do you know who threw that paper airplane across the classroom?”) and fantasy (such as, “It was an alien, Mrs. Hiebert”).

The artist’s father is still a professor doing research and teaching in the field of educational psychology at the University of Calgary. To the adolescent artist, his father’s curiosity about alternative states of consciousness was a kind of imaginary treasure chest of hobbies and a Pandora’s Box of questions about how everything works, and why.

Since 1997, Hiebert has completed a BFA at the University of Victoria, an MFA at the University of Calgary, and a PhD in Humanities at Concordia. Currently he does research for UVic’s Pacific Centre for Technology and Culture. Next September, he’ll be on faculty at the Department of Interdisciplinary Studies in Arts and Sciences at the University of Washington. Maybe we should worry about his future students. What fantastical and maybe dangerous ideas will be pushed into their hungry brains?

Hiebert explains his art/research practice this way: “I make art within the philosophy of art-as-life-style (as politics) rather than art as product.” This means that any objects (or conclusions) that his research projects produce are less important in themselves than the *aesthetics of the process* that led to the final physical object or body of knowledge. This resembles the idea that a completed painting by Paul Cezanne is less important than his years of careful, painstaking process figuring out how to make the painting.

However, Hiebert is not a dry Conceptual artist. His notions and projects tend to have a “pataphysical” edge (pataphysics has been described as a study of what lies beyond the realm of metaphysics; a parody of the theory and methods of modern science and is often expressed in nonsensical language). His ideas might begin with the phrase “What happens if...,” a way of thinking common in Medieval alchemy and contemporary astrophysics. As well, there is a theatrical and romantic quality to his creativity, as if he longs for the return of earlier periods of scientific research, when there was a more interesting grey zone between fact and fiction, between rationalism and belief, between the real and imagined, and less distance between the thinking individual and the edge of the universe.

A few years ago, Hiebert and his colleague Doug Jarvis organized a series of experiments in water dowsing at Open Space Gallery.

More recently, they organized a bizarre world-wide competition in telekinesis. These events of absurd science suggest that the politics behind his art-practice (if that's what is) have a whimsical, possibly satirical or anarchistic edge. They mock the common perception of the rationalism of contemporary science as a rejection of the frailty and wonderment of the human imagination.

Hiebert's exhibition will consist of very large digital colour prints of single pages from each of 18 books that have influenced his intellectual development. Among these are Thelma Moss's *The Probability of the Impossible: Scientific Discoveries and Explorations in the Psychic World*, Carlos Castaneda's *The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge*, plus philosophy texts, books about werewolves, speaking in tongues, and Atlantis.

These photographs resemble images of over-toasted transparent paper with printed words. They are made by a camera that Hiebert constructed from directions he found on the internet. The photographic process, called Kirlian photography, employs a high-voltage electric current (rather than light) to produce images that loosely record different levels of conductivity across the book page. These differences are caused by the initial quality of the paper, but mostly by the history of the substances and marks that have accumulated on the paper: finger prints, scratches, sneezes, peanut butter and jam, hand lotion, microbe footprints, nose-bleeds, coffee-cup rings—the whole index of the book's use, or misuse.

A brand new book about any subject will have almost no aura. On the other hand, the Hiebert family Bible, brought to Alberta from Mennonite Germany four generations ago, probably has a magnificent aura.

*Aurora Textualis* opens March 7, 7pm at *Deluge Contemporary Art*. Otherwise Wed to Sat, noon to 5pm at 636 Yates St, 250-384-0184, [www.deluge.ws](http://www.deluge.ws). For more on Ted Hiebert's art see [www.tedhiebert.net](http://www.tedhiebert.net).



Brian Grison is a Victoria-based artist, art teacher and writer. In March, he's teaching a weekend workshop at Vancouver Island School of Art.

# Vancouver Island School of Art

## Make your life more creative

### MARCH WORKSHOPS

**March 7 & 8**  
**The Video Doodle** Peter Sandmark  
**Chinese Brush Painting** Andy Lou  
**Watercolour Transfer** Lesley Clarke  
**Egg Tempera** Jan Gates

**March 21 & 22**  
**Perspective: Everything you Need to Know** Brian Grison  
**Drawing the Everyday** Rachel Hellner  
**Brushstroke Bootcamp** Lisa Birke  
**Silver Chain Jewelry III** Julia Lowther

**March 28 & 29**  
**Abstract Painting** Wendy Welch  
**Transferring Image to Cloth** Hilary Young  
**The Sketchbook: Keeping a Visual Diary** Inga Romer  
**Digital Photography** Andrew Kielbowicz

**REGISTER TODAY**

\$150 for 12 hours of instruction (Digital Photography is \$225 for 14 hours)  
 250-880-3500 or [info@vancouverislandschoolart.com](mailto:info@vancouverislandschoolart.com)  
 Check website for more information: [www.vancouverislandschoolart.com](http://www.vancouverislandschoolart.com)  
 Vancouver Island School of Art 2549 Quadra Street

## MERCURIO GALLERY

Robert Amos  
Jim Gordaneer  
Linny D. Vine

On The Street Where We Live... the urban landscape of Victoria

March 5th - 21st 2009

602 COURTNEY ST  
250.388.5158  
1 BLOCK NORTH OF THE EMPRESS.

## CHOSIN POTTERY

Decorate your home with style

4283 Melchosis Rd.  
daily 10am - 5pm 250-474-2676  
[www.chosinpottery.ca](http://www.chosinpottery.ca)

## March Getaway

Starting at \$170  
(Includes breakfast & yoga class)

### the Lodge at Weir's Beach

250-478-5000  
[www.thelodgeatweirsbeach.com](http://www.thelodgeatweirsbeach.com)