Western Fronts

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Director of sculpture, at the Shanghai Oil Painting and Sculpture Institute, Chen Yin Yan explores the psychological dimensions of femininity, love, desire and beauty, in a physical environment, that reverberates between the subjective and the collective, internal and external, the seductive and the disturbing. Discrepancy Between One Idea, an installation including 600 roses laid on a table, fed intravenously by tubes connected to infusion bags, is a poetic statement embracing the fantasies of love, desire, eternity, and the impossibility of reviving something fated to die.

Chen Yin Yan has exhibited in Beijing, Hong Kong, Amsterdam, Kassel, Copenhagen and Brisbane. This first installation in North America was shown at the Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art, Brisbane, in 1996.

The exhibition is part of Jiangnan, a festival organized by Xia Wei and Hank Bull, director of the Western Front Society, with work by Hui Jie Ming, and including artists from Shanghai, Suzhou, Hangzhou and Nanjing in exhibitions at ArtSpeak (Guang); Caronna Jeffress (Kens Luns); Vancouver Art Gallery (Pan Tianshou); Art Bacas (Xu Bing, New York); Huang Yong Ping, Paris, Qui Si, Beijing, Pang Tao and Lin Yan, New York; Presentation House (Geng Jiani, Zhou Tiehai); Access Gallery (Yang Zhen Zhong);grunt Gallery (Shi Yong, Shanghaji); Morris and Helen Belkin Gallery (Gu Wenda, New York), and the Charles H. Scott Gallery (Chen Huiyan, Ding Yi, Shen Fan, Shi Hui, and Liang Shaoji) with an international symposium positioning modern and contemporary Chinese art.

Discrepancy Between One Idea. Chen Yin Yan, installation, 1998. Photo credit Kim Clarke

WESTERN FRONTS

From Prairie artist-run centres, The Banff Centre in the Rockies, to the Bushlen Museum near Stanley Park, where Ross Penhall's June exhibition of bi-dimensional work sells out for the second season in a row), or to the Granville Gallery Row, (where Dale Chihuly brings window painting, and across to Victoria on Vancouver Island, the 1998 summer visual arts season is in full bloom. Vie des Arts was in the West for an advance preview.

Michael J. Molter

CHEN YIN YAN

Discrepancy Between One Idea

Flash Art

Flash Art (cover), Zhou Zaika, 1997.

Flash Art, June exhibition, Presentation House, North Vancouver, B.C.

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Do It '98

Surrey Art Gallery, March 21-May 20
Flash Art Gallery, May 12-June 14


Do It began in a conversation in 1993 between curator Hans-Ulrich Obrist, Bertrand Lavier and Christian Boltanski, while both the artists spoke about the written instructions contained within their own work, in order to observe effects of translation upon an artwork's interpretation. From this arose the idea of an exhibition of procedural instructions, which exist outside the venue, in a static condition. Exhibitions which followed the first do it at Klagenfurt, Austria, (in countries with which France has diplomatic missions), include: Bangkok, Bagota, Brisbane, Geneva, Glasgow, Helsinki, Ljubiana, Reyjavik, Sienna, Tallinn, and Upsala.

Governed by certain do it game rules, that include the museum's selection of at least 15 of a potential 30 works (to be created by gallery staff or community), ensures a new constellation of work at each representation. The diverse cities in which do it takes place, constructs a context of individual distinctions, with multiplied meaning, as the various interpretations of texts accumulate in venue after venue. There are no signatures by the artists, but each artist receives photo documentation of the work realised. No work is collected, except in certain exceptions, such as Boltanski requesting photos of a school group be dismantled by giving the individual photos, with his stamp on back, to the parents etc., ensuring a non-static, and non-fetish character. The community, (local businesses, organizations, manufacturers, club owners, and students) were invited to participate at Surrey Art Gallery, March 21 - May 20, Surrey, B.C., in interpretation of texts by some 30 artists which included Christian Boltanski, Paul Armand Gette, (square meter boundary), Joseph Grigely, (Write and mail a postcard to a long lost friend), Felix Gonzalez-Torres, (drop 180 pounds of candy in corner), Yoko Ono, (Make a Wish and Tie it to the Branch of a Tree).


Do it (home) projects are also proposed by such artists as: John Baldessari, Leon Golub, (don't do it), Jiri Kolar, Arnette Messager, and Rosemarie Trockel.

ICI is circulating an expanded version of do it to travel throughout North America and South America through December in the year 2000.
In Vancouver, on upper Granville row new galleries such as Third Avenue Gallery and Jennifer Wittman have opened, while Monte Clark has a new location. The Equinox, Catriona Jeffries, Bau-xi Galleries, Douglas Udell and Heffel Auction House are producing contemporary exhibitions of high quality. Diane Farris has increasingly caught the public's attention with a painting performance that covered the windows during a spring exhibition by Dale Chihuly. And on Granville Island this spring the Emily Carr Art School participate in the city wide Jiangnan project with an exhibition and conference that embraces contemporary Chinese art and Chinese artists doing it now.

**CAROL SAWYER, AMAZONIA**  

Carol Sawyer's work at ArtSpeak Artist Centre combines photographic media, objects and aspects of performance art and music composition. A multi-media installation, *Amazonia* is inspired by movies, comic books and television femme fatala, posing a threat to machoistic scenario narratives. Sawyer's *Amazonia* pushes beyond the limits of mortal and terrestrial boundaries as a site where contradictory ideas about gender, sexuality and power collide. Sawyer's positive identification with these images opens up a space to imagine new narratives and outcomes.

**LEE GOREAS**

*Two Constellations*, Open Space, Victoria, B.C. April 1998

Curator Jennifer McMackon proposes the idea of a constellation to understand the works represented by these two artists without relying on binary readings, as a wedge prying the works loose from their mutual orbit exhibition space. Open Space is a flexible forum generating and supporting experimental coexistence of two formations.
Roger Ing, 1989, enamel on photo, New Utopia Restaurant, Regina.

This exhibition in conjunction with the making of a documentary film on the work by artist Roger Ing, (featuring interviews with Art MacKay, Jack Severson and Edward Poitras), relates and reveals the depths of Ing’s interventions and behind the scenes work in the development of prairie art culture. While proprietor of the local landmark New Utopia Restaurant in Regina, Roger Ing and the Utopia were the subject of a 1990 light box photo work by Edward Poitras for Indigena at Canadian Museum of Civilizations.

Roger Ing’s history of recycled paintings and mixed media objects, presented through the collections of artist and curator Jack Severson and Regina collectors, have been a subject of controversy over the years. Championed by some in the art establishment, such as Art MacKay, and visiting art historians with an outside view of the landscape, Roger Ing’s work has achieved renewed attention for its anarchistic energy and scope. Ing studied Chinese calligraphic brush work in Hong Kong before his introduction to western art in the 1960’s. Largely autodidact, since studies with Ken Lochhead at University of Regina, Ing is a phenomenon of the popular prairie art about to be rediscovered. His recycled ink and enamel on paper, canvas or mixed media surfaces, cover subjects from ballet to Beethoven, from Frankenstein to fabalistic crossovers between Pollock and Rogerism pistache.

Andrew Valko, R.C.A. –
DUSK TO DAWN
Curator Tammar Zenith, May 7-30, 1998
New Zones Gallery of Contemporary Art, Calgary

Andrew Valko uses printmaking techniques in this solo exhibition of recent realist acrylic paintings on wood, at NewZones architectural gallery space. Tamar Zenith describes Valko’s realist paintings as so illustrative that it is a nearly paradigm of camera technology. Critic Robert Enright suggests that Valko’s nomadic movements and his explorations with various medium have drawn him into producing a strong complex series of work. Valko’s router technique on wood creates deep textured surfaces, reinforcing the paintings in his exhibition at New Zones. Valko’s studies...
with master Japanese printmaker Toshi Yoshida are also apparent in this work, which led to his participation in the annual Yoshida International printmaking exhibition in Tokyo from 1987-1994. He has exhibited with Boston Print Makers at the Boston Art Museum, and in solo exhibited his contemporary block prints at Memorial University of Newfoundland Art Gallery.

After 20 years in Canada, following apprenticeship training in Prague, Valko has produced a surreal body of paintings, reminiscent of DeKooning or Magritte, in intimately personal and private shared moments.

Awarded the Royal Order of Canada in 1994, Valko has exhibited at and in the collections of: the Winnipeg Art Gallery; Taipei Fine Arts Museum; Brockton Art Gallery, Boston; and the Glaridge Collection, Montreal.

CHANGING SPACES
VANCOUVER ART GALLERY
May 2nd through September 27th, curated by Mary Jane Jacob, Fabric Workshop and Museum Philadelphia, features work produced by artists from Australia, Britain, Japan, South America and the United States.

Art and Process, Thorn, Jan M., 14 pp. ISBN 1-895442-22-9, an anthology of work by Emily Carr, explores the artist's three periods of art study, at San Francisco's School of Art and Design, in England at Bursley and in France at St. Ives, and the transfer of her plein-air approach to the British Columbia wilderness with John Duncan Ferguson, Phelan Gibb and Frances Hodgkins. Organized by the V.A.G., at Greater Victoria Art Gallery (June 24 to September 30) and Kamloops Art Gallery (Nov 14-Jan. 24, 1999). Changing Spaces, is also at Power Plant, Toronto, June 24-September 7.

THRESHOLD,
THE POWER PLANT
Contemporary Art Gallery, April 5 – June 14

10th anniversary exhibition, with artists: Ian Carr Harris, (Canada), Teresita Fernandez (U.S.A.), Peter Kogler (Austria), Mischa Kuball (Germany), Claude Leveque (France), Anja Lislegaard (Norway/Canada), Masato Nakamura (Japan), Ilya Rye (Canada), and Judith Schwarz (Canada).

A groundbreaking exhibition of new works, in a context that indicates a transition into an incorporeal space, consists of ten rooms as a site for the intersection of physical, mental and emotional contemplation, representing artists from several generations, who rely on allusive techniques to effect a transition into a speculative dimension, that engages the senses through use of colour, texture, sound and light in a range of media from drawing, installation and computer imaging. Catalogue by head curator Louise Dompierre, with essays by Antonio Guzman and Timothy Murray, 90 pp., 1998, ISBN 0-921047-53-9, considering developing area of activity in relation to secular postmodernism and introspective impetus in current practice.

PRINTS by Painters
William BAILEY
Eric FISCHL
April GORNIK
John HARTMAN
Stuart OXLEY
Christopher PRATT
Margaret PRIEST
Tony SCHERMAN
JUNE

CALGARY photographers
Chris THOMAS
Dario ARGENTO
JULY
WEST COAST AND LOWER MAINLAND
EAST MEETS WEST

Vancouver art is taking on the Asian flavor that the rest of the city have adopted over the past ten years with a vengeance. Not only has the venerable cultural institutions, commercial galleries and non-commercial spaces increased their exhibitions of artists from China, Hong Kong, Singapore and India, but the British Columbia and Canadian artists and their work have taken on the trappings of the eastern voice as well; the newest commercial galleries are now owned and operated by the trained Asian curators and artists who have no where to ply their trade other than starting spaces for the benefit of themselves and fellow countrymen. The opportunities for artists of Pacific Rim descent far outstrip possible institutional openings for curators and administrators, and is reflected in the growing number of exhibitions which present the work emanating from the Far East.

Hangzhou and Nanjing brought to life by Hank Bull of the Western Front, Sheng Tian Zheng, Director of Art Beatus and Xia Wei a Masters student at the University of British Columbia and involved a dozen galleries and institutions, more than 20 Chinese artists and culminated in an international symposium on Chinese art. This scholarly approach and massive collaboration (artists, galleries, and cities) opened many minds, and eyes, to not only the art presented, but also instilled the thought that the west coast of Canada is capable of looking beyond itself. Art Beatus, with galleries in Vancouver and Hong Kong focuses on (international) contemporary Chinese art presenting the work of artists such as Xu Bing, whose installation New Chinese Calligraphic in essence a controlled experiment in language, foreign culture and adaptation as viewers were asked to duplicate recognizable Latin letters with brush and ink to form seemingly unfamiliar Chinese calligraphy; and Huang Yong Ping, also an installation artist, whose Terminal Shiphol (Amsterdam) was presented a miniature replica of Amsterdam's Schiphol International Airport filled with insect and amphibian life form in the departure sector of the main terminal, creating an overwhelming sense of basic survival and cultural identity. Presently, as a continuation of the Jiangnan Project, this gallery is showing three generations of Chinese modernists, women from the same family, grandmother, Qu Li, daughter, Pang To, and granddaughters, Lin Yan whose work plays with perfunctory modernist ideals while still bringing new thoughts to the vernacular of strict modernism.

CATRIONA JEFFERIES Gallery presented the installation works of Canadian Ken Lunn and Chen Zhen alongside a collaborative project that pointed to cultural identities and similarities: presently the gallery is offering a survey exhibition of photographs by the late Canadian (nee Japanese) artist Roy Niyok, a modernist in his own right. At the Bau-Xi Gallery, David Sorensen represented the figure in scintillating coloured views entitled Deities and Demons, his simple depictions of East Indian gods and goddesses floating on textured canvases evolved an academic style of India, no doubt effected by travels to the sub-continent. Toronto artist Joanne Tod joined the view to the Far East with her stark and poignant photo-realist paintings at the Equinox Gallery of Indian-Asian-Canadian Friends preparing for ceremonies outfitted in ethnic dress in the incongruent settings of Western hotels. Every item in the paintings carries equal billing which is not an easy task when beautiful women of colour dressed in satins and silks of a multitude of brilliant colours stand centre stage like paragons of ethnicity. Karen Yoelovich was presenting her version of the Pacific Rim at the Diane Farris Gallery with an exhibition entitled B.C. Native and Immigrants. The idea of race seen metaphorically as indigenous, and immigrant, botanical paintings. The Vancouver Art Gallery seems to have become comfortable with its role in the community as the elder statesman by joining the Jiangnan Project with an exhibition entitled B.C. Native and Immigrants.

The Art Gallery of Greater Victoria with its grab bag of mini-exhibitions has three worthy of the trip: Within the Walls: A Story of Healing, documentary photographs from inside the prison walls; Jack Bush: Hymn to the Sun (1929-1955) organized by the AGO; and from their worthy Asian Collection, Art of the Hermit Kingdom (Korea). The other galleries that should be visited while in the Capital City include Hoi Polloi which deals and presents exclusively arte pop Mexicano; Fran Willis Gallery with traditional theme exhibitions by contemporary artists; and the Alcheringa Gallery with its exhibitions of indigenous art from around the globe, and at the present includes a view of masterful objet d'art from an exhibition titled Many Traditions: Art of New Ireland, Aboriginal Australia, Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea and British Columbia.

While some would say the west coast of Canada is lost behind that barrier of mountains and rock, I would say we have finally put our best foot forward in an attempt to recognize and analyze the many aspects of international contemporary culture, which exist here in Canada, such as Asian culture, indigenous culture from around the world, First Nations art and culture and our own imported western histories.

Todd A. Davis

Huang Yong Ping
Cage Insect, 1996
Terminal Shiphol (Amsterdam)
Art Beatus Gallery
Vancouver, B.C.
The perception that Vancouver is the only site of curatorial innovation in B.C. is being challenged by Kelowna. Under the rejuvenating direction of curator-in-residence Diane Dickert, the decade old, artist-run, Alternator Gallery is raising its profile by showing inventive original exhibitions. The Kelowna Art Gallery's move to a spacious, purpose-built building two years ago, and its young curator, Clint Roenschi's, tracking down and coaxing Guido Molinari west, has also attracted national attention.

This Winter (Feb. 21-April 5) Roenschi curated Lebensträume; sculpture, drawings, and site-specific work by Peter von Tiesenhausen. Von Tiesenhausen is one of the few non-touristic artists linked to the eco-art movement. No urban artist communing with nature on holidays, he lives and works on the farm he grew up on near Demmitt, in Northern Alberta. His large, meditative objects embody a resonance between people and their environment rather than only illustrating that relationship.

The show features two of von Tiesenhausen's trademark wattled willow boats. The ruddy coloured one suspended above the central hallway branches downward like roots or veins. The other, propped up by wooden stools in the courtyard looks like a funeral bier for the large burnt figures in the main space. There is also a huge carved wooden bell covered in aromatic bee propolis and a carpenter art scarred dance hall floor. Few works are titled, leading viewers to a visceral rather than an intellectual response.

Von Tiesenhausen is a good painter, but beside his installations his pictures look like after-thoughts, representations of what the primary works actually embody. On their own, however, his five small paintings in a group show at Calgary's Canadian Art Galleries (April 25-May 16) have enough presence that you don't miss the installations, too much.

Also in the Canadian show were large, brushy garden paintings by Leslie Poole. The colours are bold but seem straight from the tube, and the brush work is more choppy than expressive. Bill Pura's five large paintings of suburban streets at night have a novel subject but here too the paintings are rushed; there is more concern for making a picture than a painting. The greens of the foliage are almost uniform and the light roughly handled. Nevertheless, these photo-based pictures strike the right David Lynchian psychological chord of uneasy nostalgia, the tenuous veneer of normalcy, and casual voyeurism.

One of the best painting shows in Calgary this season also examined the urban landscape. David Janzen: New Paintings at Trepanier Baer Gallery (April 23-May 23) featured twenty one intimate, fragmented views of factories, electrical, radio and cell phone towers, all set against prairie skies. A few of the pieces are in his Thiebaud/Hopperesque style, but most are nearly Impressionistic. While environmentalist issues are hinted at, Janzen is more painter than moralist. He articulates a mid-ground between culture and nature and leaves the evaluations up to us. Janzen's best pictures play between photo-realism and abstraction and communicate the pleasure of both painting and finding unintended beauty.

David Garneau

CONTEMPORARY Art Gallery

FRANCIS ALYS
le temps du sommeil
july 4 - aug 8

CLAUDIA CUESTA
sept 12 - oct 24

KEVIN MADILL
oct 31 - dec 5

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