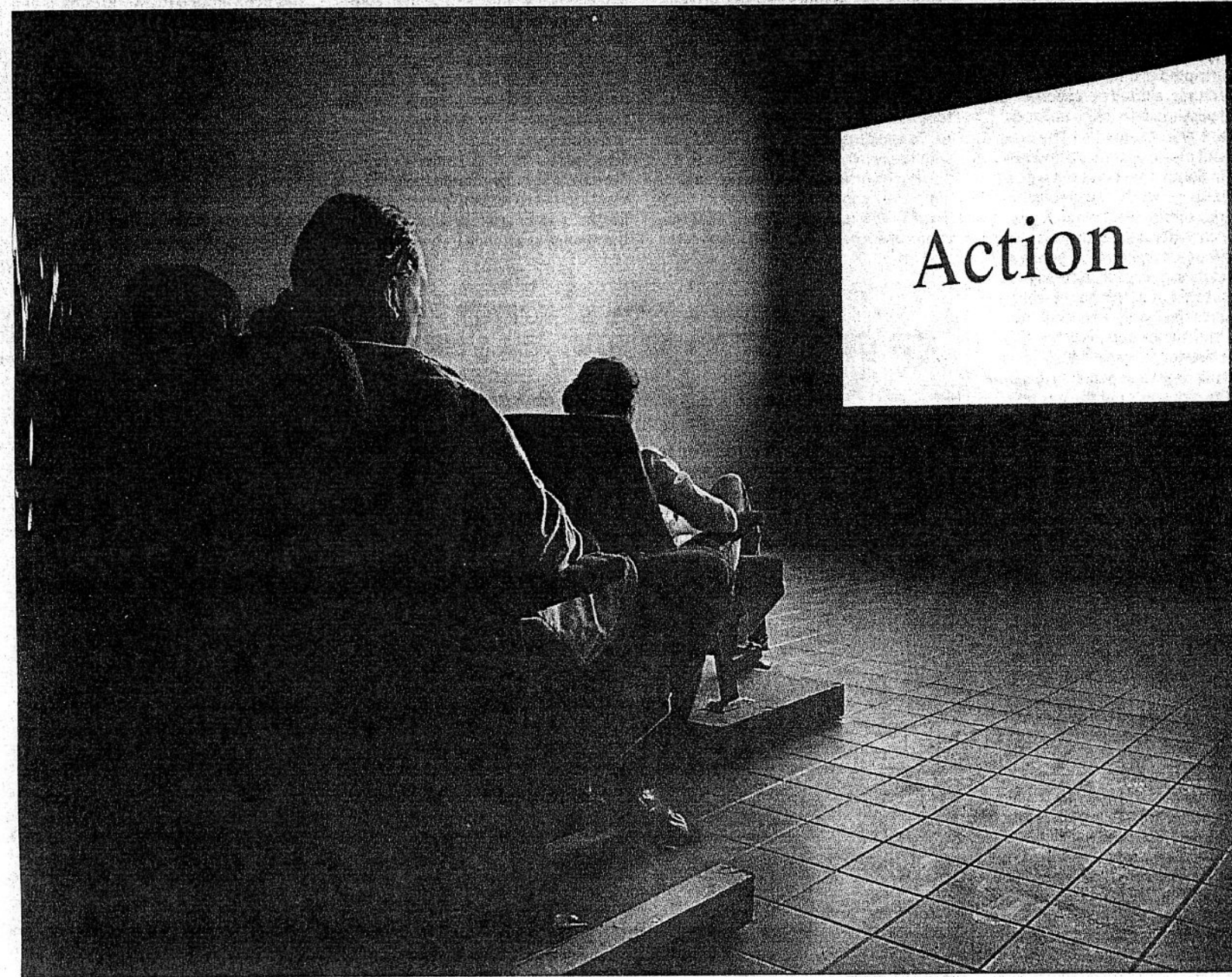


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Cover Story



"Projections" brings together cinematic work from top artists. Below, *The Muriel Lake Incident* is a theatre-within-a-gallery installation.

Where the gallery and cinema meet

Stellar lineup of art stars at festival within a festival

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VISUAL ARTS CRITIC

"Projections," a multi-site installation of projection-based art, is an extraordinary festival on its own — even with the Image Festival acting as its host.

Curated by Barbara Fischer at four galleries on University of Toronto campuses in and around the city from Sunday to June 17, "Projections" encompasses almost 40 years of the kind of work that functions both as cinema and gallery installation.

The Justina M. Barnicke Gallery in Hart House at U of T's downtown campus has been turned over to cinema-inclined projection work from David Hoffos, Nathalie Melikian, Robert Wiens, Rodney Graham and Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller. It's a lineup that could be the foundation of many an international festival.

With *The Muriel Lake Incident* (1999), Cardiff/Miller internalize the thinking and emotions usually associated with movie-going, with their theatre-within-a-gallery installation. Asked to look inside a plain, coffin-shaped wooden box, viewers confront what seems to be an empty, miniature old-fashioned movie house showing a period film, complete with a gunshot and a cowboy. Listening to the soundtrack using the provided headphones, the viewer has the impression of being drawn into

the little box itself and of watching the film by way of her/his imagination.

"Projections" is a first of sorts, considering all its high-profile talent, the timeless viability of the work and the raw popular appeal of both its form and content. There's even a filmmaking dog involved thanks to Montreal artist Jana Sterbak.

"There simply hasn't been a museum that has ever put these works together," says Fischer. "There have been a slew of big shows which have put forth the history of the projected image, including 'Into The Light' in 2004 at the Whitney (in New York). At the 2003 Venice Biennale, it was said that projection art had overtaken the rest of contemporary art."

Included among the earlier work in "Projections" is a 1969 piece by David Askevold, only shown once before in Halifax,

and a pair of 1970 works, *Still Life (The Table)* and *Light Bulbs* from Murray Favro, one of the winners of this year's Governor General's Awards in Visual and Media Arts.

"There was another big push in the medium around 1985, with a second generation of artists, and again in the mid-'90s with still another generation of artists," says Fischer. "It reached such a point of saturation that people were calling for the end of it, but that was at the point it was really blossoming."

Projection art almost inevitably raises questions of space, light, object and illusion. Work exhibited at the U of T Art Centre from Michael Snow and Rebecca Belmore, among others, explores questions of light and the sculptural implication of the projection screen itself.

"A lot of work has made the screen an important player in

the process," says Fischer, noting the resulting ramifications when "work is projected onto to something that resists the projection."

With Christine Davis's "Drink Me" series, for instance, a large still photograph of a woman is projected on to a screen made up of densely packed plastic roses. Alternatively reflected, distorted and perforated by this petal-filled surface, the image is in fact reinvented by the very object that makes it visible.

"With Michael Snow's work" — *Two Sides to Every Story* (1974) — "the screen is a puzzle," says Fischer. "It becomes a sliver of nothing as you walk around it."

Work showing at the Blackwood Gallery (3359 Mississauga Rd. in Mississauga) and the Doris McCarthy Gallery (1265 Military Trail in Scarborough) explores considerations of space within the context of the gallery. For instance, Sterbak's *Waiting for High Water* (2003) presents a dog's eye view of streets of Venice. Stanley, the artist's Jack Russell terrier, was outfitted with a specially fitted camera for its entrée into the world of cinematography.

Projection art involves the entire smorgasbord of tech-based practices from image looping to multi-channel projections. Yet it requires an entirely different headspace than digital or Internet-based art that involves compression, mobility and internalized space.

"In terms of the technology it requires and the space that it takes, it has become a sort of super art," says Fischer.

