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Tuesday, January 27 CONTACT US

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THE NEXT 7 DAYS: EVENTS (9) + OPENINGS (9) + DEADLINES (13) + CLOSINGS (10)

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TORONTO
TERENCE DICK
 REBECCA BELMORE AT THE JUSTINA M. BARNICKE GALLERY | TORONTO
 OUTDOOR ART EXHIBITION
 July 08, 2014

Like 8



One of the more pleasant bits of news to come down the pipe this past spring was that Barbara Fischer would be taking over the directorship of the University of Toronto Art Centre while also retaining her position at the nearby (just a clock tower away) **Justina M. Barnicke Gallery**. Given her record of curatorial mastery – particularly her ongoing solo artist exhibitions at JMB for mid-career Canadians in need of a retrospective view, as well as her habit of allowing up-and-coming curators to have their way with the space (not to mention her collaborative mega-projects like Traffic, the history of conceptual art in Canada exhibition) – this can only bode well for a city whose mid-sized public galleries are in transition in terms of location (MOCCA) or identity (The Power Plant). She has a solid foundation on which to build and that's something to look forward to.

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Rebecca Belmore, *Mixed Blessing*, 2011, mixed media sculpture

Until then, it's business as usual in the compact two room gallery with a well-timed collection of some highlights from the last twenty years or so of Anishinaabe artist **Rebecca Belmore** curated by Wanda Nanibush that was originally part of the Contact Photography Festival, but now stands on its own as a concise summary of this well-respected performance and multimedia artist. The two rooms are broken down along that divide with one covering the four walls with four performance videos while the other includes five photo-based works and two sculptures. The first room is bookended by a raw, early nineties handy-cam document that depicts a bound and gagged Belmore howling with rage before frantically pushing a pile of sand up a staircase in an outdoor courtyard in Cuba. At the opposite end of the spectrum (and the room) is *Perimeter*, a video from last year that is cleanly edited, dramatically soundtracked, and beautifully shot by a professional cinematographer. In it the artist is most often seen from behind, decked out in an X-marked road worker's safety vest while trailing an illuminated tape behind her to mark the industrialized landscape of Sudbury. While in all of her work the first recourse is inevitably to read it through a First Nations p.o.v. ("Fuckin' Indian / Fuckin' Artist" reads the hoodie on her sculpture *Mixed Blessing*), the opportunity this exhibition affords is to see how her open-ended gestures can translate that experience to other contexts, be it the Iraq War, the meaning of monuments, the loss of identity, and the devastation of the environment.



Heretical Objects (Trevor Blumas & Robert Cram), *Breaking Up*, 2014, birdseed

This past weekend also saw the annual **Toronto Outdoor Art Exhibition** come and go. It seemed a bit less sprawling than usual without the tents spreading out under the Nathan Phillips Square walkways and up behind city hall. The usual suspects were all there, from young upstarts with their graffiti-inspired canvases and handcrafted oddities to the long-standing landscape painters and the guy who makes bowls out of tree trunks. Well-respected veterans like **Scott Griffin** (who never seems to miss a year) plied their wares alongside newer contenders like **Noelle Hamlyn**, whose salt crystal-encrusted objects demanded a closer look, and **Julia Hepburn**'s surreal dioramas in storm lamps that I recognized from the early editions of **Wondereur**. Alongside the working participants, there was also a curated exhibition titled *Art Now* that did the best it could in light of the hubbub of the cruising crowds and the distractions of all that the city has to offer. In cases like this, it's good to go big (as we learned **last week** at *Art Spin*) like **Mark Prier**'s minivan-sized wood plank nest *The Lines* or the **Escapespace** mirrored architectural strip. There is also the option to multiply like **Derrick Piens**' scattered *Epiphonic Tombs* that were reminiscent of Franz West's clunky functional sculptures. But the **Heretical Objects** collective managed a real coup by appealing to the true denizens of this public square – the pigeons – by constructing their always applicable plea ("I need more") in birdseed. Consumption is consumption, I guess, no matter what your species.

Justina M. Barnicke Gallery: <http://www.jmbgallery.ca/>

Rebecca Belmore: KWE continues until August 9.

Toronto Outdoor Art Exhibition: <http://www.torontooutdoorart.org/>

Terence Dick is a freelance writer living in Toronto. His art criticism has appeared in Canadian Art, BorderCrossings, Prefix Photo, Camera Austria, Fuse, Mix, C Magazine, Azure, and The Globe and Mail. He is the editor of Akimblog. You can follow his quickie reviews and art news announcements on Twitter [@TerenceDick](https://twitter.com/TerenceDick).

3 comments

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Posted by , on 2014-07-08 13:43:14

You're absolutely right. Thanks for the correction.

Posted by **Lisa Myers**, on 2014-07-08 12:52:04

Hi Terrance,

Just a quick note:

Just read your review of the Rebecca Belmore exhibition at Barnicke. Since you start by discussing Barbara Fischer's curatorial mastery it would have been appropriate to mention that Wanda Nanibush curated the exhibition of Belmore's work. Although you don't say it explicitly, the review reads as though Fischer curated the show.

thanks,
Lisa Myers

Posted by **Lisa Myers**, on 2014-07-08 12:48:45