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# Art in Practice

arts administration as art practice

4.17.2011

**It takes everyone to know no one**

Lorna Brown, Jennifer Cherniack, Rodrigo Hernandez-Gomez, Chris Holman, Yvonne Lammerich, Dax Morrison, and Anne Ransden

Curated by Ana Barajas

April 8 – May 21, 2011

Exhibitions I've seen  
 Exhibitions I intended to see, but didn't  
 Exhibitions I wanted to see, but didn't  
 Exhibitions I didn't see, but liked the publicity/press release  
 Exhibitions I saw, took the pamphlet/press release and intended to read, but didn't  
 Exhibitions I saw because my friends were in it/I knew someone in it  
 Exhibitions I saw but didn't know any of the artists  
 Exhibitions I didn't see, but should of/said I would because my friends were in it  
 Exhibitions I was in as an artist  
 Exhibitions I curated  
 Exhibitions I should have curated  
 Exhibitions I worked on in an administrative capacity  
 Exhibitions I worked on in a technical capacity  
 Exhibitions I worked on in a creative capacity  
 Exhibitions I worked on and got paid for  
 Exhibitions I worked on as a volunteer  
 Exhibitions I saw and liked

Jennifer Cherniack, *The History of Art According to My Archives*

ongoing series in a variety of media, 2009-present

An exhibition about exhibitions and the institutions which host them. That some of the works in *It takes everyone to know no one* suggest new models for arts institutions while structuring themselves within the very framework they wish to critique is beside the point. The other option, to host an exhibition on institutional critique outside the white cube venue, also doesn't seem any more productive. At the very least the gallery model allows the artists and curator to organize talks for people to come and talk about the institution in an institutional manner. People want to discuss infrastructure because it allows that chance for resistance against the control that it actively and insidiously asserted upon us. The contemporary art gallery often flaunts itself as being a space for reflection, challenge and critique, but this is usually very different from what actually goes on, which is something that strongly suggests the maintenance of the status quo, again and over again.

The artists in this exhibition take a good-natured approach to institutional critique using humour and the power of suggestion (rather than commitment) as tools for critique. I personally adhere to the dramatic ideas of Allan Kaprow who believed that museums are cemeteries for art and culture; through museum placement, art is taken out of its natural context, spirit and connection to its creator and is then left to ossify and become inert [1]. The artists in *It takes everyone...* are not so aggressive (or dramatic), although they remain passionate about their goals. This act of pointing and suggesting instead of committing is a bit self-preserving (that institution you claim to critique just paid for you to show your work, have a meal, maybe a trip to Toronto and a few beers) but also productive. These people don't have the answers, but they bring up and address the argument, and I certainly don't know many other artists who actively take this up through their work and make it public. The works by Lorna Brown, Yvonne

**About an Arts Administrator****Ginger Scott**

Toronto, Ontario,  
Canada

I am an artist who has chosen to pursue the administrative side of the arts' community. Helping out other artists who are dedicated, confident and capable with smart ideas are the types of people I want to encourage and support as a gallery administrator. Give good artists space, funding and some follow-up or accompanying text (when appropriate, or inappropriate) and they can succeed. We can all succeed.

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**Blog Archive**

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**Arts Links**

- Pressed Engine
- Lisa Visser's website/blog
- Art and Argument
- Otino Corsano's Blog
- Hunter & Cook Magazine Blog
- Contemporary Art Gallery (Vancouver) Blog
- BadAtSports: Contemporary Art Talk
- VAAA Blog
- Art Fag
- Emusee
- Artspace Blog
- New Art TV - artists' talks online
- Interaccess' Blog
- New York Times Art Blog
- Unedit My Heart
- 500 Words
- Carousel Recommends...

Lammerich, Dax Morrison (*Migration Patterns*, 2010 ongoing) and Jennifer Cherniack all address the model of the art institution through what can be currently observed. They are specific to the internal operations and systems, whether it is the language of the stereotypical institutional mandate, the migration history of directors and curators among Canadian arts institutions, or a listed archive of exhibition-types.

Exhibition openings where I congratulated the artist but didn't mean it  
 Exhibition openings where I went to 'be seen'  
 Exhibition openings where I got drunk and said too much  
 Exhibition openings where I got drunk but behaved  
 Exhibition openings that I didn't go to because I felt too intimidated to go alone  
 Exhibition openings where I avoided people through looking intensely at the art  
 Exhibition openings where I worked the bar  
 Exhibition openings where I had to discipline people  
 Exhibition openings where I didn't look at the art  
 Exhibition openings where I stayed the night  
 Exhibition openings where I networked in order to advance my own artistic career  
 Exhibition openings where I didn't know a single person in attendance  
 Exhibition openings where I knew the majority of the people in attendance  
 Exhibition openings where I was a featured artist in the show and had to be articulate about my work

Jennifer Cherniack, *The History of Art According to My Archives*

ongoing series in a variety of media, 2009-present

This is canonical institutional critique that still has an active and productive voice – everything remains self referential. In Isabelle Graw's essay *Beyond Institutional Critique* [2], she points out that the language and practice of institutional critique as art practice is inherently paradoxical, although I'm unsure if this is an historical fact or one that has only just now revealed itself 30 years on. The language is so ingrained that it has also become institutionalized, "a critique not simply addressed to institutions and critical of them, but also a critique of an institutional nature..." (141). The institution has prompted the incentive for artists to make art about the institution – hook, line and sinker.

Where I get uncomfortable is in the case of the externalization of the institution which lies in the work of Anne Ransden's *The Musée du quotidien/Museum of the Everyday* (2009, ongoing) and Rodrigo Hernandez-Gomez (in collaboration with Morrison and Chris Holman), *Cultural (de)Centre for a Precarious Century* (2011, ongoing). There is something eternally bourgeois about artists calling attention to the 'everyday' as something that is now important to pay attention to - as if the rest of us, in our hustle-bustle lives, are somehow missing out on the importance and meaning of what's directly in front of our faces. This is an outdated responsibility of the artist to be a privileged inspired twat (again, I'm being dramatic). Sure, there's plenty of literature and theory on the concept of the 'everyday' including Kaprow's ideas about the blurring of art and life. What makes this more uncomfortable is not the blurring but the authority of the institution being applied beyond itself and onto the 'everyday'; a dangerous one-way street. This institutional application, although already occurring through Big Brother, cannot possibly be spun as something that we should embrace, especially in the art world that thrives in the periphery.

Art movements that I deem hilarious  
 Art movements that hated women  
 Art movements that were scared of women  
 Art movements that had lots of vaginal imagery  
 Art movements that were fascist  
 Art movements that are remembered for the wrong reasons  
 Art movements that are epitomized/described based on one work made in that era  
 Art movements that looked amazing according to documentation, but probably weren't great  
 Art movements where the gossip/personal history is more interesting than the art itself  
 Art movements that were well intentioned, but became the catalyst/inspiration for generations of bad art

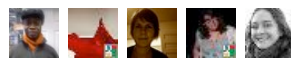
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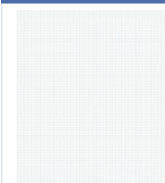
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Jennifer Cherniack, *The History of Art According to My Archives*

ongoing series in a variety of media, 2009-present

In the *Museum of the Everyday* posters, the voice of the cultural institution is used as a tool through which the viewer can understand what's being said, killing the power of individual opinion, inference and any possible honest awe over everyday experience. The institution is telling us what to pay attention to. I don't care about a collection of people travelling to school or walking the dog or having a bath; I'm now dead inside. *Cultural (de)centre* employs the corporate ribbon-cutting ceremony as a tool to signify the inauguration of yet-to-be-claimed public spaces. In the exhibition space a monitor shows us stills and video of people cutting ribbons at rather non-descript sites, including domestic living rooms, restaurant kitchens, parks and back alleys in order to claim them as cultural spaces. If the project continues ad-infinitum, soon enough, all spaces will be institutionally claimed, and all of the everyday activities within will ossify and die according to Kaprow's analogy.

These two projects suggest new boundaries of what is considered as institutionalized art and what isn't, subsequently moving towards establishing institutional confusion. There is no outside in these projects, as the inside of the white cube regurgitates its insides into its surroundings. This means that an outside objective critique is so absorbed and indistinguishable from the inside that it fails to exist. Don't do this. The outside is not the enemy – unless you think that making everything look the same may also eventually invert as to undermine the authority of the institution? Maybe? Graw says that “a constitutive outside is not only needed, but inevitable. Some things will always be left but, often deliberately: structurally speaking, every centre has its periphery.” (143) Despite institutional critique's institutionalization, a superbly predetermined twist, a critique will always have room to exist. From this, I think that any projects which look to work the periphery into the centre are not only fighting a losing battle, but are kidding themselves by thinking that they are in any way peripheral to begin with.

Don't make the white cube into something more than it is – it doesn't benefit any of us.

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[1] I also believe that the curated re-contextualization of works (works that are taken up time and time again for exhibitions) produce an instable, fluctuating history that can eventually cause the works to lose their providence and meaning. How many curatorial contexts were really necessary for the work of Jeff Wall before the audience didn't know what the fuck was going on anymore?

[2] Found in *Institutional Critique and After: Volume 2 of the SoCCAS symposium*, JRP/Ringier (Letzigraben, Zurich: 2006), Ed. John C Welchman

Posted by Ginger Scott at 9:14 PM

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