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THE NEXT 7 DAYS: **EVENTS (15)** + **OPENINGS (10)** + **DEADLINES (9)** + **CLOSINGS (14)**

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WHY CAN'T MINIMAL AT THE JUSTINA M. BARNICKE GALLERY | PARDES AT THE KOFFLER CENTRE

September 23, 2014

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Curator **John G. Hampton** hits the nail on the head when he confesses to finding Minimalism funny. What with the preponderance of plus-size children's building blocks and the habit of relying on as-is building materials (bricks, railway ties, etc.), the school of thought has always left itself open to the honest question: "Is this a joke?" There is also an inescapable element of the absurd in pushing art to an extreme. However, whereas Samuel Beckett at least identified the clowns in his frontier theatre, visual artists of the first generation remained, for the most part, straight-faced (though Tony Smith must have been smirking when he titled his iconic big black metal cube *Die*). In the intervening years, a younger crowd have taken on the task of poking fun at their elders' pretensions or playing them up for purposes and parallels outside the traditional scope of the standard form.



Jon Sasaki, *A Minimalist Cube Shipped With Minimal Effort and Expense*, 2012, powdercoated steel cube, accumulating shipping labels

The works in Hampton's Curatorial Studies thesis project exhibition, currently on view at the **Justina M. Barnicke Gallery**, are split down the middle between an inside joke on the art world and a riff on the interplay between Minimalism and the outside world. The former includes **John Baldessari's** lacklustre musical reading of Sol LeWitt's instructions for artists, John Wood and **Paul Harrison's** six video variations on the empty white box played out as deadpan action art performances, and **Ken Nicol's** obsessive observance of Carl Andre's direction to repeat oneself. The latter add an additional layer to the art historical intertextuality by introducing impure elements such as Coke Zero in **John Boyle-Singfield's** transparent cube and shipping tags to **John Sasaki's** *Minimalist Cube Shipped with Minimal Effort and Expense*. The full import of Minimalism's influence is best seen when it's reflected in the oppressive forms it takes in architecture and design. The clean lines and flagrant essentialism is full of both hubris and pathos, be it in **Jennifer Marman** and **Daniel Borins'** jitterbugging *Big Blue* or **Liza Eurich's** less than perfect *Bad Rainbows*. As Homer Simpson is wont to say, "It's funny because it's true."

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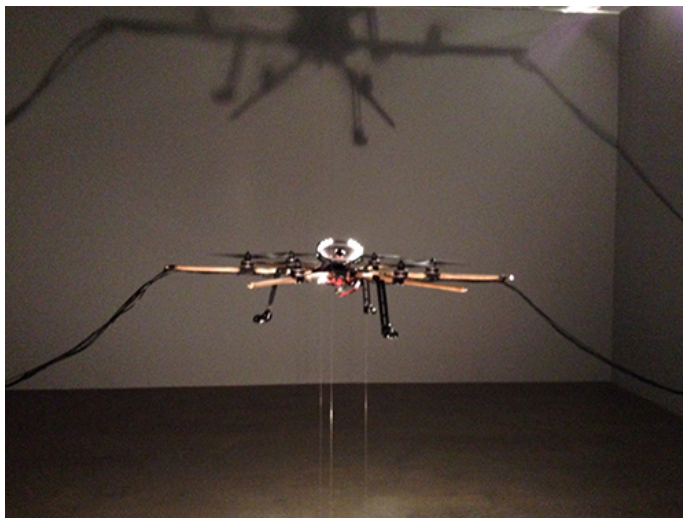
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Nadav Assor, *Ophan*, 2014, custom-made hexacopter, control, power and sensing equipment, speaker, lights

The mixed media works in *Pardes*, currently on view at the **Koffler Centre of the Arts**, are neither funny nor minimal, but they delve into the recesses of truth telling - with more of an emphasis on the telling. The quartet of Israeli artists who make up this exhibition all draw on sound and recontextualizing found material in order to rethink tradition and question inherited knowledge.

Amnon Wolman imbeds speakers into a prayer shawl and a history book to literally change the message. **Ira Eduardovna** blends a TV sit-com with an avant-garde choir and reveals the apocalyptic narrative within each. **Nevet Yitzhak** screens a fascinating remix of archival footage of the Israel Broadcasting Authority Arabic Orchestra (who ever knew there was such a thing?) that is unfortunately marred by the competing sounds from the other installations. Sound bleed is a chronic problem in this crammed show and the worst culprit is also the most compelling piece.

Nadav Assor's drone-flown speaker blasts a call to prayer from the heart of the whirling, windy, droning (now I know it refers to the sound it makes) device that is so intimately tied to our understanding of 21st Century warfare (no matter how far into the past those conflicts stretch). The works in this show are maximal in both form and content, leaving one with lots to chew on even after the noise dies down.

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

Why Can't Minimal continues until October 19.

Koffler Centre of the Arts: <http://kofflerarts.org/koffler-gallery/exhibitions/featured/>

Pardes continues until November 30.

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).

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