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2014 CRITIC'S PICKS
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As the Toronto art scene gets ever more decentred (though there seems to be an enclave establishing itself at Bloor and Lansdowne), I keep hopping in my car and heading farther afield to find some of the most intriguing exhibitions in the city on the outskirts. This year the Art Gallery of Mississauga, tucked away in the shadow of the suburban city's sexiest apartment towers, kept me coming back for more with essential exhibitions like the retrospective of South Asian artist-activists The Sahmat Collective. Even when I'm not physically there, I'm inspired by the relentlessly enthusiastic Twitter feed of Director Stuart Keeler and Communications Officer Jaclyn Qua-Hansen.

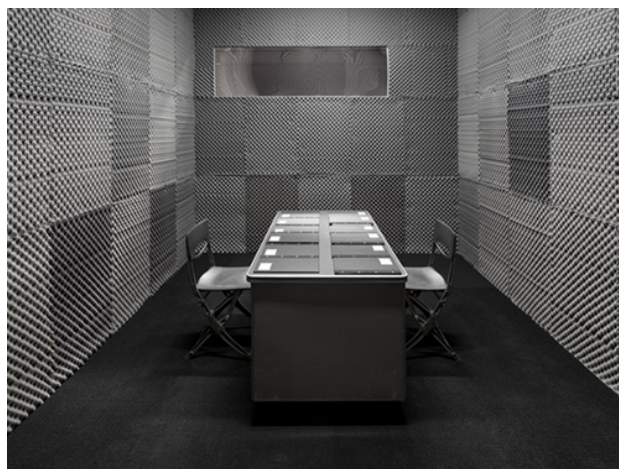
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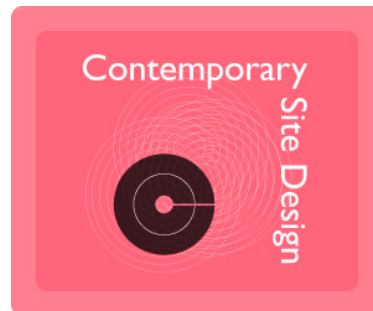


Charles Stankievecch, Counterintelligence, 2014, installation view (photo: Toni Hafkenscheid)

When I called Ahmet Ögüt's semi-self-explanatory This area is under 23 hour video and audio surveillance at the Blackwood Gallery way back in January one of my favourite works of the year, little did I know how the pieces would fall into place. A couple weeks later I worked my way through Charles Stankievecch's encyclopedic Counterintelligence exhibition at the Justina M. Barnicke and thought everything that needed to be said about the web woven between 20th Century art movements and the international spy network had been said. But then Wendy Coburn's Slut Nation: Anatomy of a Protest closed off the year at the Barnicke (once again!) and brought the police state home (hot on the heels of protests pushed into riots in the wake of dropped indictments in the deaths of Michael Brown and Eric Garner). And Ögüt's work reappeared as the titular inspiration for a group exhibition that continues until June 30 of 2015 at the Jackman Humanities Institute, which is part of the University of Toronto, and produced by - yup, you guessed it - the Justina M. Barnicke Gallery. For an extra dose of surveillance culture in the age of advanced militarization, you could have also made your way over to the Ryerson Image Centre for a historical survey of war photos displayed along with the late Harun Farocki's meditation on video games and combat training, and Public Studio's Drone Wedding. And then there was the drone-mounted sound work by Nadav Assor in the Koffler Gallery's PARDES exhibition. Conspiracy, serendipity, or zeitgeist? I say all three.

In a parallel narrative of my gallery-going travails, I began the year kicking myself for missing Tricia Middleton's 2012 exhibition at Oakville Galleries as I wandered in wonder through her immersive installation at the Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art's "go big or go home" exhibition Misled by Nature (which, truth be told, was a co-pro from the National Gallery and the Art Gallery of

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Alberta). By the time she had her fall solo show at [Jessica Bradley Gallery](#), I was there the first weekend, initially miffed that she hadn't lined the walls with her signature slabs of wax, but then more than delighted with the singular works scattered throughout the space like remnants of a fairy tale gone awry. The sickly sweetness of her confections are physical in both the embodied sense and their emphatic materiality, but they invite endless contemplation as to the stories they tell. Their promise, like the promise of all good works, keeps me searching for more.

**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](#).

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