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I tend to avoid writing about exhibitions I haven't seen (though that isn't to say I don't critique them in casual conversation), but I feel inclined to break the rule this week, only because the curatorial premise of *Lifting: Theft in Art* is so intriguing. Unfortunately for me, the one time I find myself in the neighbourhood of **Georgia Scherman Projects** (it is a bit out of the way), they just happened to have gone home early. Damn. So with my deadline pending and the exhibition closing on Saturday, I have to limit myself to an uninformed "heads up!" After scanning the online catalogue on the [curators' website](#), I am determined to return in the next day or two. If only to see **Joel Ross'** pilfered hotel room (yes, the entire room!).



Nancy Davenport, *Weekend Campus*, 2004

At the opposite end of the spectrum from "cut and run," we find *Stutter and Twitch*, a collection of works on the theme of stasis, curated by **Chen Tamir** for the **Justina M. Barnicke Gallery** at Hart House on the University of Toronto campus. The location is apropos as two of the seven works deal specifically with post-secondary students. **Nancy Davenport's** *Weekend Campus* is an endless pan of a traffic jam that melds human tedium with automobile carnage. It's inspired by a similar scene in Jean Luc Godard's *Le Weekend*, but I must admit I haven't seen that film. I did, however, go to university before the days of online course selections and remember quite well the interminable lines of students, some of whom had spent the night on the street, wrestling with the bureaucracy of academic administration. Davenport's campus is less intent on singular aims and contains a number of familiar players, from the homecoming parade float with marching band to the "credit card" car that appears during frosh week, ready to introduce the youngsters to the simple solution to all that waiting.

A similar reference to student politics of a previous generation (as represented in film) inspires **Johanna Billing's** *Project for a Revolution*. She's tipping the hat to Michelangelo Antonioni's *Zabriskie Point*, but replacing political radicals with a fidgety bunch of students, sitting around in silence, waiting for something to happen. When it does, nothing changes. If you ask me, the trouble with young people today is not that they fail to live up to the promise of the past or that they're numb to the point of inaction (I know plenty of junior activists), it's that images of them end up looking like fashion spreads. That's the problem! They know who is evil and why; they just look like caricatures whenever they speak out about it. So they sit in silence. And just like in university, I end up looking for the cute girls in class.

David Claerbout contributes a dramatically installed video called *Vietnam 1967, near Duc Pho (reconstruction after Hiroshima Mine)* that brings together the immanence of war photography with the sublime transcendence of landscape painting. A shattered fighter jet hangs suspended in space above a field in Vietnam. The only movement is the sunlight as it passes over the wreckage. It's strangely compelling.

Adad Hannah and **Kristian Horton's** works are less than compelling. Hannah's "still" videos look like photographs and would mean just the same if they were. Horton's shrinking comic strip illustrates its point, but doesn't take it anywhere. **Jennifer and Kevin McCoy's** video plus miniature set generate some amusing narrative possibilities (but I would have placed the two parts in separate rooms) and **Yael Bartana** documents the intense degree to which Israelis take the moment of silence on Remembrance Day (but ruins it with distracting post-production effects and sound processing).

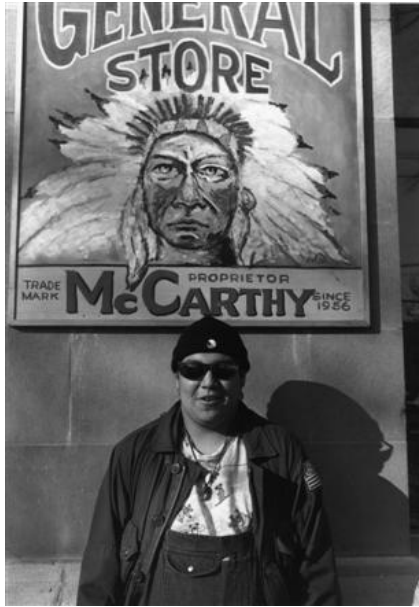
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Jeff Thomas, *How do you Measure Up? Bear Portrait*, Toronto, 1994, silver gelatin print

Over at the **University of Toronto Art Centre**, **Jeff Thomas** documents his ongoing exploration of Aboriginality in photographs and a couple videos. The exhibition is called *Drive By* and, like any travelogue, the look of the pictures is less important than the story behind them. Thomas supplies handy footnotes for each series and a modicum of context for each work. The narrative of his ongoing inquiries, as he searches for clues in the contemporary landscape of friezes, monuments, and tacky roadside billboards, is what drives this experience.

Finally, I'd like to take the opportunity to exploit my soapbox and weigh in on the nominees for the **Sobey Art Award** (just so we can have something to argue about over beers on the patio this summer, now that Obama has won the semi-finals). From east to west, **Mario Doucette** is like most past East Coast nominees, an unknown quantity. What I saw of his paintings looked too cute, too Royal Art Lodge, too been-there-done-that. **Raphaëlle de Groot** is also new to me, but one look at her website (thank god for web-savvy artists!) shows promise. There are some intriguing performances that look like what I imagine John Bock's performances look like. The Ontario nominee is a cheat again as the judges have named the ostensibly occasionally "Mississauga-based" **Terence Koh** a contender. Koh makes powerful (and expensive) installations of charged objects in monochrome. On cynical days, I suspect the emperor has no clothes. Over on the Prairies, **Daniel Barrow** is great and my pick-to-dick largely because he is such a good writer (which really doesn't make sense considering this is a visual art award). And on the west coast, **Tim Lee** impresses a lot of impressive people with his photo-conceptual gags that reference recent art history and pop culture. He only serves to confirm my contention that jokes become art when they're not funny.



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, and The Globe and Mail. He is the editor of Akimblog.

Georgia Scherman Projects: <http://www.georgiascherman.com/mainframe.html>

Lifting: Theft in Art continues until June 7.

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

Stutter and Twitch continues until June 29.

University of Toronto Art Centre: http://www.utac.utoronto.ca/index.php?option=com_frontpage&Itemid=1

Drive By: A Road Trip with Jeff Thomas continues until June 28.

Sobey Art Award: <http://www.sobeyartaward.ca/>

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