

Justina M. Barnicke Gallery
Hart House, University of Toronto
7 Hart House Circle
Toronto, ON
M5S 3H3 CANADA
416-978-8398
jmbgallery.ca

Gallery Hours
Monday to Friday 12 – 5pm
Saturday 1 – 5pm

The gallery is closed on statutory holidays.
The gallery is wheelchair accessible.

Admission is FREE

Gallery Staff
Barbara Fischer, Executive Director/Chief Curator and Senior Lecturer, MVS Curatorial Studies
Rebecca Gimmi, Programme Coordinator
Christopher Régimbal, Exhibition and Projects Coordinator
Wanda Nanibush, Curator-in-Residence
Sandy Saad, Curatorial Assistant: Permanent Collection

Acknowledgements
I would like to thank the artists Karen Henderson, Yam Lau, Gordon Lebrecht, Kika Thorne and Josh Thorpe for your deeply insightful work, thoughtful conversation, boundless enthusiasm and trust in the project. I am particularly grateful to my principal advisor Barbara Fischer for your wisdom, mentorship, guidance and inspiration. Thank you to my external advisor Sarah Robayo Sheridan, for your generous support and thoughtful feedback. Thank you to my curatorial committee and faculty advisors, Marcin Kedzior, Ann MacDonald, Christof Migone, Kim Simon and Lisa Steele. Thank you to Gina Badger, Trevor Embury, Lin Gibson, Rebecca Gimmi, Johnson Ngo, Christopher Régimbal and Juliana Zalucky. Thank you Kim Fullerton, Screen Art and Akau Framing & Art. Thank you Emily Fitzpatrick and Michael Polubiec for being such encouraging colleagues and friends. Thank you Jamie Matechuk for your insights, creativity and grammar lessons. Finally, thank you to my family for your encouragement and support.

This exhibition was produced as part of the requirements for the MVS degree in Curatorial Studies at the University of Toronto.

Free Contemporary Art Bus Tour
Sunday April 28, 12 – 5pm

Curatorial Tour
Sunday April 28, 4pm

Brochure Design Trevor Embury, aftermodern.lab
Printer Captain Printworks

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Kika Thorne, *Singularity*, 2007 – ongoing. Lycra, aircraft cable, hardware, rare earth magnets, dimensions variable.
Photo: Scott Massey. Courtesy of the Contemporary Art Gallery, Vancouver.



Yam Lau, *Virtual Chamber: An exercise in custom fitting* (a bookshelf for Henri Bergson's *An Introduction to Metaphysics*), 2012.
Reflective aluminum, MDF, mixed media, 9.37" h x 0.64" w x 6.25" d. Courtesy of the artist.

Biographies

Karen Henderson is a visual artist working in time-based media, photography, sculpture and site-specific installation. She attended the Central School of Art and Camberwell School of Art (London, UK), and holds an MFA from the University of Victoria (Canada). She lives and works in Toronto and has exhibited work in Canada and internationally at galleries including the Art Gallery of Ontario and The Power Plant (Toronto); Hallwalls (Buffalo, NY); and The Nunnery (London, UK).

Born in Hong Kong, Yam Lau is an artist and writer based in Toronto. His creative work explores new expressions and qualities of space, time and the image through the application of painting, computer-animation and digital video. In addition, Lau has initiated a number of independent projects such as using his car (Toronto) and a donkey (Donkey Institute of Contemporary Art, Beijing) as ongoing mobile project spaces. He is represented by the Katzman Kamen Gallery (Toronto) and Yuanfen New Media Art Space (Beijing). Currently, Lau is professor of painting at York University (Toronto).

Gordon Lebrecht was born in Winnipeg, where he studied architecture for three years before switching to the School of Art at the University of Manitoba to pursue his interest in painting. He received his BFA in 1976 and began his career as a commercial illustrator while still a student. In 1980 he moved to Toronto, where he lived until his death in 2011. As an artist, writer and scholar Gordon's work defied categorization and crossed multiple platforms, including painting, video, installation, drawing, printmaking and graphic design. Lebrecht's published work includes *Afterthoughts: A monologue [to RS]*, *Gordon Lebrecht 1989 – 1992* (YYZBOOKS, 2008) and *Nonworks: Gordon Lebrecht 1975–2008* (Centre for Contemporary Canadian Art and Plug In Institute of Contemporary Art, 2011).

Kika Thorne's work includes sculptural, curatorial, experimental documentary film and video practices. Thorne received her MFA from the University of Victoria, BC and has exhibited extensively including Berlinale Forum Expanded; The Apartment and Vancouver Art Gallery (Vancouver); Murray Guy (New York); CCCB and OVNI (Barcelona); Pleasure Dome and the Power Plant (Toronto); E-Flux Video Rental (Global Tour). She is currently working towards a PhD at York University (Toronto).

Josh Thorpe is an artist and writer living in Toronto. Recent work includes exhibitions and special projects at Toronto Sculpture Garden, MOCCA, YYZ Artists' Outlet, Oakville Galleries, Campbell House Museum (Toronto); Plug In ICA (Winnipeg); Printed Matter (New York); and David Roberts Art Foundation (London, UK), and in 2009 Art Metropole published Thorpe's first book, *Dan Graham Pavilions: A Guide*. In 2011, Thorpe was a finalist in the Toronto Friends of the Visual Arts Artist Award and was elected to the Sobey Art Award Ontario Long List. He works as a writing instructor at the University of Toronto and as a writer at ERA Architects.

I THOUGHT THERE
WERE LIMITS
MARCH 28 – MAY 18,
2013
KAREN HENDERSON
YAM LAU
GORDON LEBRECHT
KIKA THORNE
JOSH THORPE
CURATED BY JULIA
ABRAHAM
OPENING RECEPTION:
THURSDAY MARCH 28,
7 – 9PM
JUSTINA M. BARNICKE
GALLERY



I THOUGHT THERE WERE LIMITS

I thought there were limits, Newtonian
.....
The apples, falling, never hit the ground.
— D.G. Jones¹

I Thought There Were Limits brings together five Toronto-based artists whose work engages with both the material and conceptual dimensions of space. Taking as its departure the tradition of site-specificity pioneered in the 1960s, the exhibition presents a category of site-specific gestures that derive unique material implications once they are affixed to a site. By displaying previously conceived artworks along with new works made for this occasion, the exhibition tests the limits of site-specific practice as both responsive to a particular place while also adaptable to any site. Like a perpetually falling apple and the expanding ground beneath it, the artworks form a responsive relationship to their site and in so doing reveal specific architectural, temporal and virtual properties of the Justina M. Barnicke Gallery. This selection of artworks is representative of the variations of site-specific practices within Toronto contemporary art. The project demonstrates a local history of spatial practices that challenge the terms and expected ways that a work might be responsive to a place.

Karen Henderson’s work reflects, echoes or condenses the existing spatiotemporal aspects of a site. Drawing on the materially responsive aspects of site-specificity, her work often responds directly to an actual location while giving consideration to the temporality of the site. For example, her work *Solid Light (YYZ Walls, North 20 minutes, South 24 minutes, East 26 minutes, West 26 minutes)* (2011) consists of photographs printed on clear acrylic that depict a composite image of the gallery walls they are displayed in front of. Sandwiched together in the order they were taken, the images create a three-dimensional cementation of the site’s temporality. Similarly to *Solid Light*, Henderson’s site-based work created for this exhibition becomes an apparatus for a visual orientation and temporal measurement of the gallery. This process collapses the differentiation between the site and the work.

Yam Lau constructs physical and virtual spaces. Using computer-generated digital animation, three-dimensional modeling software, architectural interventions and text-based work, Lau engages both digital projections and physical manifestations of space. Lau’s digital projects present multi-dimensional perspectives of contained cubic and prismatic spaces using transparency and rotation. Alongside his interest in rendering visible spaces circumscribed in digital formats, Lau’s installation practice also activates material space as a form of container. In a recent work, *Virtual Chamber: An exercise in custom fitting (a bookshelf for Henri Bergson’s An Introduction to Metaphysics)* (2012) Lau presents a mirror-lined incision into a wall, cut to the precise dimensions of Bergson’s published text, in order to create a support structure for the single book. With a similar approach for this exhibition, Lau takes into consideration the existing armature of the Justina M. Barnicke Gallery to show that the walls may not only exist as spatial frameworks, but as a material made porous and expandable.



Josh Thorpe, *Stick for the Kidds, Roxborough Drive, Toronto*, 2010. Acrylic on balsa, 35.8”h x 0.47”w x 0.47”d. Courtesy of the artist.

A great deal of Gordon Lebrecht’s work includes an engagement with architectural constructions and spatial interventions. During Lebrecht’s prolific career he produced a large number of installation drawings, many of which were never physically realized. These drawings depict installations that are site responsive in varying degrees, since some of the drawings were proposals for specific gallery sites, while others were not. Lebrecht’s *Folding Partition* (1980) is an example of a work that was not proposed for a specific site. The drawing depicts a folding accordion that suggests an expansion and contraction of the length of a room depending on the position of the partition. Since these drawings propose installations that were not realized, they perform a conceptually bound and imaginative spatial intervention in the Justina M. Barnicke Gallery. Lebrecht’s drawings provide an anchoring point in the exhibition, giving context to the current reprisal of spatial interventions that became popular a generation ago.

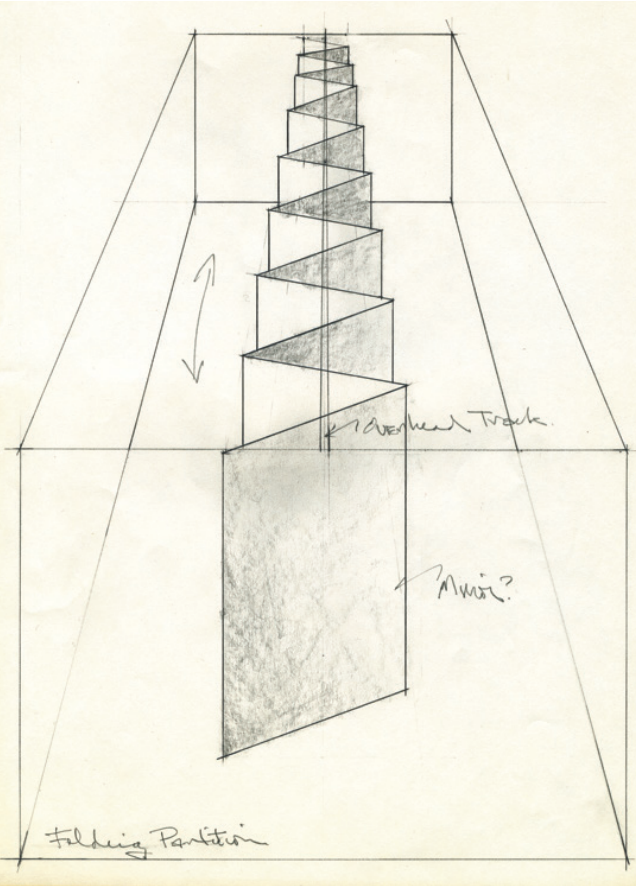
Kika Thorne’s practice involves both sculptural and cinematic work. Thorne’s installations are always dependent on a material position, just as the cinematic image is only fully perceptible once it meets a surface. Thorne’s tension sculptures, including *Singularity* (2007 and ongoing), are constructed as a result of the pull of a cable affixed

to the structural elements of the site and stretched to a central point of intersection. The dependence of this work on its site determines the material dimensions of the piece while also operating as a tool of magnetism and resistance. The body of the installation is based on the site’s specific architectural elevation, dimension and volume. Thorne’s work in this exhibition flexes to the available size of the room such that the work literally becomes the shape of the site.

Josh Thorpe’s practice has often included a traditional site-specific engagement. Recently, his work has opened into a more ambiguous ground of site-specificity that entails a playful engagement with space. Thorpe’s ongoing work *Sticks Series* (2009 and ongoing) consists of individual balsa sticks painted in response to the colour of a specific room, an architectural peculiarity or a lighting condition. The sticks serve as tools of perception that create an anomaly of the site, suggesting a continuation of perspective beyond the limit of the wall, or demonstrating an exaggerated folding of a corner. *Sticks Series* presents a convergence of space into line.² These mediations disquiet the space, however subtly, gesturing towards a variable site-specificity wherein the position might be physically actual, temporally passing, or immaterially imagined. Thorpe’s new work for this exhibition promises to loosen the boundaries of a spatially responsive practice.



Karen Henderson, *Solid Light (YYZ Walls, North 20 Minutes, South 24 Minutes, East 26 Minutes, West 26 Minutes)*, 2011. Colour photographic prints on clear acrylic sheets, 30”d x 27.5”h x 7.5”h. Courtesy of the artist.



Gordon Lebrecht, *Folding Partition*, 1980. Graphite on paper, 11”h x 8.5”w. Collection of Lin Gibson.

I Thought There Were Limits demonstrates a selection of artists who engage with site-specific practices in highly divergent ways, and shows that there is an abundance of spatial practices at play in Toronto. The exhibition reveals that spatial interventions are not bound to one place at one time but are instead reactive, generative and purposefully flexible. The space that is produced by these gestures will potentially traverse their edges and slip outside of both their individual parts and the exhibition site. As such, the site is no longer a limit but soil to cultivate.

— Julia Abraham

¹ Douglas G. Jones, “I Thought There Were Limits,” *Phrases from Orpheus* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1967), 1,5.

² Josh Thorpe, “Josh Thorpe And Mathew McWilliams: Friends In Art,” *Canadian Art* online (March 7, 2011).