

SANDRA VIDA
vision and voice

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Self-Portraits/Split Personalities, installation, Centre Eye Gallery, Calgary, 1985

A HISTORY OF BEGINNINGS

by Marcella Bienvenue

I REMEMBER QUITE vividly the first time I laid eyes on Sandra Vida.

I was working in an independent bookstore at the North Hill shopping centre back in 1979 and Sandra walked in the door. I guess we had heard of each other before in a peripheral way, each forging our own careers as independent artists. Born and educated in Calgary, Sandra had been in Vancouver for a couple of years where she worked as a self-taught fabric artist. On her return to Calgary, she became involved in artist collectives at The Premier Laundry building and then Dandelion Studios in the old Deane House. I had been a printmaker since leaving art school and was just beginning to explore video and performance with works like *Stephen Conversation* and *I Believe in Myself*. Sandra was making journals, collages and fabric constructions.

That first meeting struck me as an important moment. But little did I know how our lives as artists would evolve, and what a significant role we would each play in the development of Calgary's diverse and vibrant art scene. With this important publication, it is challenging and exciting to have the chance to look back at our long history as colleagues and friends.

Sandra made a significant move when she re-located to a live-in studio on the downtown mall late in 1979. Through her friendships with other artists in the building, she began to define her journal-keeping and sketching, her obsessive collecting and combining of images, and her production of fabric pieces, as a serious art practice. And she began to be seen as an artist by her peers.

Another notable moment for me was in 1982, when I first viewed Sandra's work, gathered together for a show at Centre Eye Gallery (an early artist-run photo centre now defunct). I was by then the director of the Calgary Society of Independent Filmmakers (CSIF), and Sandra was coordinator of Calgary's prominent artist centre, Off Centre Centre (OCC, originally called Clouds 'n' Water Gallery, and later The New Gallery). The walls of Centre Eye were covered with her collages, now made into prints using a colour photocopier.

I recall thinking that it was typical of Sandra to turn a mechanical process she probably used regularly in her work at the gallery (photocopying press material, invitations and posters) into a creative medium in relation to her own work. She was intrigued by colour copy machines, which at that time were finicky, often jammed, and produced strange colours and effects. She grew to appreciate this transformation process and incorporated it into her collage work. The appeal was also partly the ephemeral quality of the finished works — consciously antithetical to the precious art object.

The Centre Eye show introduced themes that have recurred in Sandra's work — her identity as a woman, her relationship to her community, her ironic humour — under the broad heading of how an individual forges a life within socially constructed roles, personal history, and the external environment.

Because of Sandra's strong visual sense, and her creation of serial images, I felt that it would be appropriate to introduce the idea of motion into her work. I talked to her about the idea, and later encouraged her to participate in a project called *Free Three Minutes* at the CSIF. This marked Sandra's first venture into film, and the beginning of her ongoing interest in time-based media. *Free Three Minutes* challenged artists to produce a three-minute

film using Super-8 stock. Her piece, *3 Days and 3 Nights in 3 Minutes*, examined her waking life as a gallery worker and artist, and her dreaming life each night where she explored her hopes and fears.

Sandra took to the medium and made a second animated film, *Projected Images*, as a CSIF Special Production Project in 1988. This ten-minute piece looked at the “great masters” paintings of history through the eyes of a woman viewer. By placing her own face within the paintings, she humorously questioned the validity of this largely male art tradition.

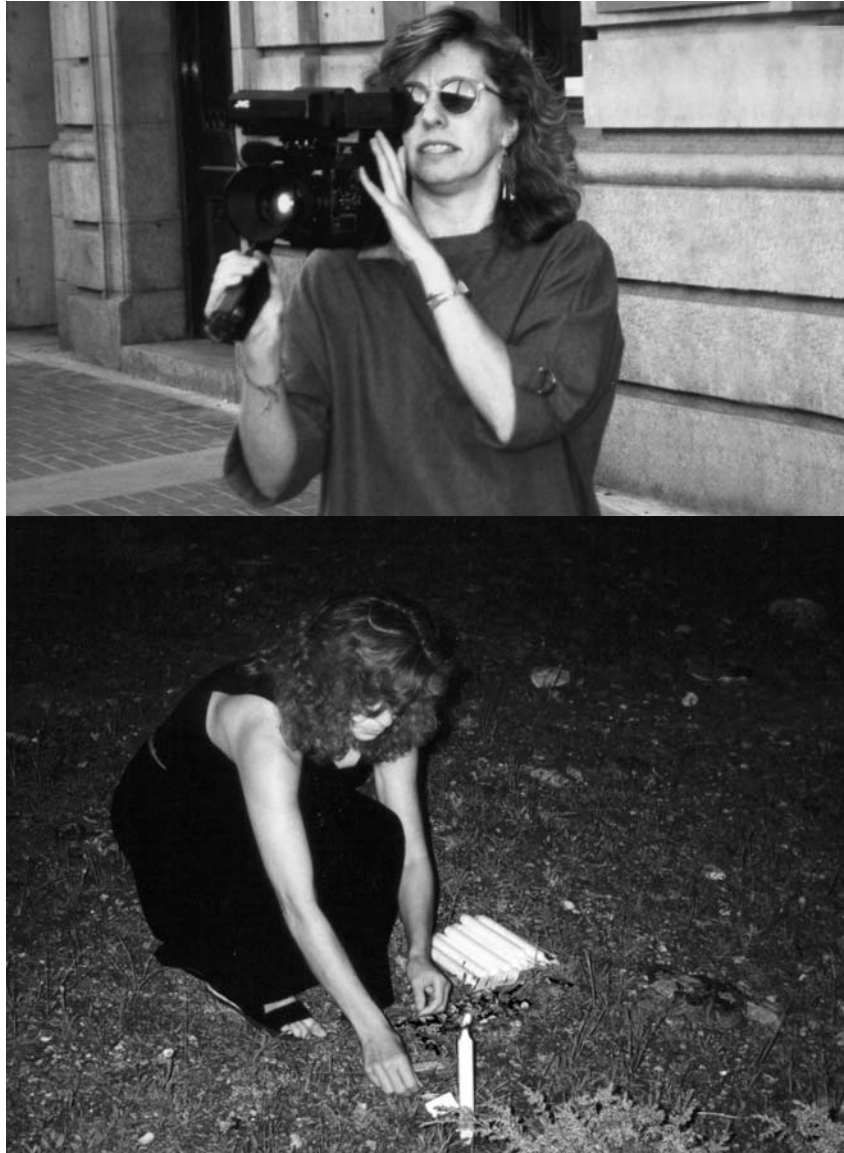
When Sandra moved from animation into narrative video work, then to more abstract installations through the 80s and 90s, it was with the encouragement and assistance of fellow artists like Nelson Henricks, Rob Milthorp, Vern Hume, Sheila Urbanoski, Ken Doren and Jim Goertz. Large format film was prohibitively expensive for some of her projects, and she found the video access centre, EMMedia (where she would complete over a dozen works) a supportive space and community. In 1989, two videotapes were completed. *Bodies of Fate* used the metaphor of prairie wheat to examine notions of fate and will. *Dialogue...to be continued*, pictured a long-term friendship through overlapping text from journals and letters, along with images of poignant meetings and haunting memories. In 1991, *Angelus Intimus*, an interrogation of dictated gender roles through shifting points of view and frames of reference, premiered at a local bookstore. *Conversation Piece* followed in 1992, a spare, black and white collaborative piece with English artist Charlie Holmes. Sandra's work began to be seen everywhere from obscure backroom spaces to high-profile festivals.

Sandra's progression into film and video seemed like a natural evolution. Looking back, I can see that her basic methodology did not change significantly. I would say that she continued to use a collage process, assembling and juxtaposing images in a way that left it up to the viewer to make the connections, to imagine different outcomes. The method served her well in works that embodied social commentary, reflected on the past and the present, or contrasted imagination and reality. Her later video work echoes this approach with a more refined montage aesthetic, in which images are combined in a poetic flow across the screen. Aesthetically, she has never abandoned her concern for colour, contrast, balance and sensual appeal.

Sandra's interests continue to range wider than the art milieu. Perhaps her university studies provide a clue to this — she studied English literature (drawn by her love for reading and writing) and Psychology (her fascination for human interaction) as well as art. Writing informs her work, and she has written for regional and national publications. She continues to keep written journals that may include sketches and collage, and text often plays a central role in her video pieces. And perhaps too, her parents Bob and Betty Gibb, who were leading lights in amateur theatre in Calgary, were a lasting influence.

Sandra's motivation for art work also fuelled her need to make a difference in her community. You might call it a dissatisfaction with things as they were, a dream of an alternative or a better world. Her art and community work became almost an illustration, a demonstration, of what that better world might look like.

Sandra became deeply involved with the artist-run centre system, as administrator of Off Centre Centre/The New Gallery (1980–1995), as president of the Prairie Artist-Run Centre Association (PARCA, 1985–92), and then as administrator of ANNPAC/RACA (Association of National Non-Profit Artists' Centres/ Régrouperment d'Artistes des Centres Alternatifs) during its transformation to the Artist-Run Network/ Le Réseau d'Artistes Autogéré (1993–95).



Ceremony, name-changing performance, Tunnel/Sleeping Buffalo Mountain, Banff, Alberta, 1992



Video still from *Bodies of Fate* 1988

This offered her not only the chance to make a remarkable contribution locally and nationally, but also provided inspiration for her evolving art work. Her attendance at national conferences across the country and in the USA placed her at the centre of developing art practice and theory. Responding to global movements, Sandra was inspired by and involved herself in feminism, social activism, and identity politics. She witnessed the budding forms of new music, sound poetry, experimental film, video, performance art, and, equally significant, the merging and interaction of genres and media.

Locally, visiting artist programs brought exciting edgy artists to Calgary, adding to the catalytic conditions of the time. The early artist initiative *Parachute Centre for Cultural Affairs/Artons* (where I worked at the time) had introduced Fluxus artists like Robert Filliou, writers like Fielding Dawson, and multi-media artists like Michael Snow and General Idea. Performers like Dr. Brute (Eric Metcalfe), Anna Banana and Margaret Dragu had a significant influence on local activities. And as women artists, Sandra and I also found inspiration from groundbreaking work by artists like Carolee Schneeman, Linda Montano, Eleanor Antin and Suzanne Lacy and thinkers/writers like Lucy Lippard, Gloria Steinem, Donna Haraway and Griselda Pollock. Off Centre Centre continued to bring artists from across North America and Europe through the 70s, 80s and 90s. While artist-run galleries made these programs a priority, mainstream galleries like the Glenbow Museum, the Nickle Arts Museum and the Alberta College of Art gallery began to bring a wide range of practitioners of emerging art forms to the city.

Those early days of fledgling artist-run activity were exciting times. As active participants, we felt, even at the time, that we were shapers of a new era. Along with OCC and CSIF were others like *Centre Art Video* (later *EMMedia*), *One Yellow Rabbit*, and other dance and music and performance collectives that evolved (with Sandra often playing a mentoring role) —

along with groups that emerged and later disbanded. It is important to note that the developing scene was not a series of isolated streams, but an interactive and dynamic community. Artists attended each other's events, were presented in each other's spaces, and worked together on collaborative projects. We supported each other, initiating networks that continue to encourage local artists to this day.

As Sandra and I became more aware of each other's work and the emergence of important local work in time-based media, we brainstormed to create further projects and opportunities. This led directly to initiatives like the two *Media Blitz* festivals (1988 and 1989), followed by *Pulse* in 1991. The Alberta College of Art, EMMedia and Second Story Gallery (now Truck) were invited to join with the CSIF and The New Gallery to showcase a "blitz" of performance, film, installation and video by local artists. These festivals brought to the fore what were then under-represented art media, fostering and encouraging Calgary's artists and the centres that supported their work.

In the early 90s Sandra's public identity went through a shift when she decided to change her name from Sandra Tivy to Sandra Vida. She was born Sandra Gibb, but she chose to call herself by the middle name of both her mother and sister (Vida) and officially changed her name in 1992.

Sandra experimented with different ways to present video in a context that altered its reception. These included an early installation with bones and tree stumps, along with sawdust, pennies and ground rubber strewn on the floor of a darkened room in a small bookstore (*Ceremony of Ashes*); and a video work placed within the incongruous settings of a junkyard and then a public park (*Field Study*).

Working alongside First Nations artists and artists of colour (like Shirley Bear, Marrie Mumford, Lillian Allen, Cat Cayuga, Denise Lonechild and Cheryl L'Hirondelle) first inspired Sandra to investigate her own heritage and history. This marked a turning point in her work, and led to her growing concern over systems of exclusion and accessibility. As she became more involved on the local and national level with cultural equity issues, her own cultural identity — Scottish, Celtic — played a more central role in her art works.

This publication focuses mainly on the past fifteen years of Sandra Vida's art production, in which she worked in multi-media installation, bringing a number of elements together — sound, video, still images and objects — to create experiential spaces within a gallery setting.

Sandra's first major installation of this type, *...near where my great aunt was born* (curated by Franklyn Heisler, Muttart Gallery, 1992) was a noteworthy example of her continued use of her own body to stand in for a chosen persona. Along with other women artists of the last century, Sandra had used this strategy in her performance and collage work, literally placing her self within the frame of her productions. I can see that her early performances fed into this layered work, in which she dressed as her great aunt, visiting places she may have known in and around Glasgow, with the exhibition presenting the video and photographic evidence of that creative journey.

Other important works followed in the next decade. During a feminist residency at The Banff Centre, she worked with Irish artist Pauline Cummins on a video work that has been presented in many and varied venues, often as a projected wall work. *The Autonomous Eye* was a courageous piece that affirmed an independent means of constructing female identity. The two artists continued to work together on various later projects (including co-curating an exhibition of Irish and Canadian video art in 2004–2005, *Locus Suspectus*, which showed in Canada and Ireland).

A three-channel work in 1995, *Triad*, interwove stories from personal history and ancient legend with a situation from contemporary life. In this piece, Sandra invited me to perform the role of a woman who arrives in a hotel room with a suitcase full of mysterious objects that refer symbolically to the “baggage” of the other stories. Working collaboratively with Mohawk/Onondaga artist Cat Cayuga, Sandra created an installation in Hamilton in 1997, *Full Circle*, that found the common threads in the different cultural histories of the two artists.

Kitchen Freedom is probably the most complex in Sandra’s body of work so far. Presented at the Nickle Arts Museum in 2000 (in curator Christine Sowiak’s local-focused *Series*), it combined objects and images from the 1950s kitchen of Sandra’s youth with subversive images from the ancient Celtic past. The hearth, represented by stoves, kitchen tables, and an old radio became a site for the investigation of the enduring legacy of woman’s role as housewife, undercut by contrasting images that intrude from another era.

In 2005, Sandra produced *Bower*, a sophisticated and magical piece that includes two projected videos, which create the illusion of viewing a woman sleeping and dreaming within a medieval enclosure. The changing imagery suggests the shifting roles of women through those fraught times.

With her most recent work, *Threads*, Sandra again sifts through history for inspiration in the present, with a work that examines global labour and exploitation. She returned to Scotland, this time to research members of her family who worked in the Glasgow cotton mills and shipyards. EMMedia continues to be an important site for her productions, with encouragement, access, and production assistance for recent works from Diane Dickert, Keith Murray, Peter Curtis Morgan, Lon Parker, Brian Batista, Kari McQueen and Arya Boustani.

The following essays and commentaries discuss the media and installation works of the last decade-and-a-half in greater depth. It is hoped that this more personal account, from my perspective as a fellow artist and cultural worker, will demonstrate that these mature works emerge from a long and multi-faceted career that now spans over thirty years.

Sandra Vida’s life as an artist, activist and advocate parallels and is interlaced with Calgary’s growing artistic maturity. As many artist-run centres and collectives celebrate a quarter-century, Calgary can be proud of the exciting mix of arts spaces that now support a broad spectrum of media. Yet the grounding of Sandra’s work continues to be her commitment to exploration. Rejecting restricting stereotypes, she ventures into new territory in terms of art media (with her newest digital prints) and social commentary (as a member of Calgary’s Raging Grannies). With certitude, with humour, with determination, she moves beyond expectations to create new possibilities.

As this prolific artist turns 60 in 2007, this timely book will serve as a testament to her talents and proficiency as a mature artist, and pay tribute to her contribution to Calgary and its evolving cultural environment.



Video stills from *Angelus Intimus*, 1991; *Dialogue...to be continued*, 1989



...NEAR WHERE MY GREAT AUNT WAS BORN 1992

I'd like to introduce "history" to "story" and force them to have a new kind of conversation.

I'd like to merge personal autobiography with imaginative fiction. I'd like to question the experts.

I'd like to allow all the narratives to question and re-write each other.

Dick Hebdige Q1

THIS PROJECT BEGAN with a photograph I found while moving some of my mother's belongings to storage. It was a picture of a seated woman at an easel, beyond which is the view she is painting — a ruined castle. My mother told me the woman was my great aunt Jessie Struthers. What surprised me was that she appeared to be an artist, and that I had never heard of her. I have always respected the strong women in my family, and a missing woman intrigued me. A growing obsession took me to a studio in Glasgow during the City of Culture celebrations in 1990.

I researched what I could discover about my great aunt, piecing together a partly-invented narrative from the clues I could find. I dressed as Jessie and in a kind of ongoing performance, I walked the streets, pathways, and places she might have lived and worked. I took the train to Lanarkshire where she probably grew up, and visited the Glasgow School of Art where as a factory worker she might have been awarded art classes (they felt it would encourage the fine muscle coordination of the workers). Imagining a voice for her was more difficult — like that of so many women, her history seemed submerged in silence. And yet I imagined that she might still communicate — with me, and through me with the viewers of the installation I was to create.

There were other voices, of course. The more official voices of history (in printed text) appear in one videotape, along with my own voice (handwritten observations). But I learned an exciting fact — that within the noisy cotton mills, workers developed the ability to lip-read, and sometimes wrote notes in the dust left by the mills which could be easily erased. These secret languages somehow gave me hope that the history of women might only have gone underground, and could be reclaimed in the present. In re-inventing this episode of family history, I hoped to recover the value of alternative/subversive stories and histories.

S.V.



...near where my great aunt was born, installation, Muttart Art Gallery, Calgary, 1992

“I WANT YOU TO UNDERSTAND ME...”

by Michael Murphy

DARKNESS, WARMTH, ENCLOSURE. The usually generous entryway into the gallery has been curtailed by the addition of a wall to delineate the space, creating a doorway through which the viewer proceeds. The room is warm and stuffy — dark, except for the light on the individual works and, in the case of the video components, this light is self-generated, emanating from within the monitors.

I am immediately drawn to the series of five images on the east wall. This series comprises colour photocopies, taken from the moving images on a video monitor, enlarged, placed in wooden frames with picture lights clipped above them, the electrical cords centred, affixed from wall to floor. These blurred images are painterly, impressionistic. The moulding of the wooden frames I associate with “traditional” painting, landscape in particular. From out of these blurred landscapes I think I can discern the spires of gothic architecture, and am reminded of the work of J.M. Turner.

One large video monitor on a tall plinth is flanked by two smaller and lower monitors. Read from left to right, on the first monitor there is a close-up of a mouth speaking. And yet no words are heard, only “ambient” sounds, faintly from the monitors: the room is almost silent (silenced). On the second monitor is a series of loosely narrative images, mostly long-shots, in which Sandra Vida, dressed in period clothes, is seen (re)creating the possible paths of her great aunt (and self) through the streets of Glasgow. On the third monitor, there is a flat surface (*tabula rasa*?) covered in white dust into which a hand writes “I want to speak to you, I want you to understand me” and then erases it.

Lastly, on the west wall are two large framed photographs. On the left, a black and white enlargement of Vida’s great aunt, seated at an easel, painting a castle. The colour photograph on the right (actually, a bubble-jet printed image) is a recreation of this, yet here it is Vida who sits, similarly dressed and positioned, in the main cemetery in Glasgow (the Necropolis).

This experience in Glasgow greatly informs Vida’s exhibition, *...near where my great aunt was born*. In an artist statement she writes, “(Jessie) was an artist, she lived in Glasgow, she didn’t marry, and she remained in Scotland when the rest of the family moved to Canada in 1908. Jessie came to symbolize, for me, the ‘disappearing woman’, since she shared with so many women through the ages a slide into obscurity. I wanted to reconstruct an episode of lost history, and perhaps create for myself a role model, a historical mentor.”

...near where my great aunt was born is, in part, a documentation of the process through which Sandra Tivy has become Sandra Vida. Divorced for over fifteen years, the artist decided, at last, to throw off her ex-husband’s name. And yet she felt she could not return to her family/father’s name or mother’s maiden/father’s name, thus supporting a system of patriarchal lineage. So she named herself Vida —the middle name of her mother and sister. (Other concepts come to mind — in Spanish, “vida means life/living; similarly, “vita” in Latin, etc.)

The artist states that the book, Virginia Woolf’s *A Room of One’s Own*, is to some extent the starting point for the project. She remembers especially that Woolf says, “we think back through our mothers, if we are women...”

In this exhibition, Vida shares with us part of her journey of self-discovery, yet she does not inform the viewer of many personal particulars such as the name change and contributions of her mother and sister. An awareness of some of these particulars, in conjunction with the information presented in Vida's artist statement, led me to wonder about the absence of her mother and sister from the artwork. But this line of thinking seems unjust. A desire for such omni-inclusiveness is necessarily ideal. In a game of linguistic leapfrog, the conspicuousness of their absence might be read as signifying their conspicuous presence.

More importantly here, it is worth considering the possibility that Jessie is present in this exhibition as more than a "mentor"; it is through the process of mirroring her great aunt that Vida expresses her subject position.

The erasure of women in "art history" has been considered as part of an attempt to define women in opposition to men, negatively, as not-men. Thus, have women been (un)written so that men (who write the histories) might claim a dominant position? Until very recently, the female pronoun (she) always designated females while the male pronoun (he) designated all humans, as well as all males. Historically, patriarchal language, as manifested in the pronominal system of English, extended the scope of maleness to include humanity, while restricting femaleness to "the Other", who is by implication nonhuman.¹

Subjectivity has been constructed through language and is rooted in the ability to write one's own story/history, to say "I am (...)." Yet critics have questioned whether the word "I" is read as male unless otherwise noted, whether women have been defined as objects in relation to men, whether there have been attempts to limit women's subjectivity to areas such as house-keeping and motherhood so as not to disturb male subjectivity elsewhere.

A lack of recognition for female artists has led to approaches that do not actively challenge male subjectivity. Cindy Sherman and Diana Thorneycroft spring quickly to mind as examples of artists who are often present as both subject (artist/photographer) and object (model/photographed) in their artwork. But does control of one's own objectification a subject make? Vida, instead, chooses her great aunt as mentor and this choice might have provided her a better opportunity for self-determination. In *Totem* and *Taboo*, Sigmund Freud contends that most cultures are essentially fraternal yet it might be argued that they become patriarchal through their "natural" glorification/ghettoization of the matriarchal or, perhaps more accurately, motherhood. Thus, the choice of Vida's living mother as medium in this instance might have been problematic, limited; operating as a site for the reinforcement of dichotomized and stereotypically gendered roles.

On the wall outside the gallery I then read the quotes which Vida has provided as a framework for this exhibition. Helene Cixous' is particularly compelling:

Take the time to unname yourself for a moment...as soon as you let yourself be led beyond codes, your body filled with fear and with joy, the words diverge, you are no longer enclosed in the maps of causal construction, you no longer walk between walls, meanings flow, the world of railways explodes, the air circulates, desires shatter images, passions are no longer chained to genealogies, life is no longer nailed down to generational time, love is no longer shunted off on the course decided upon by the administration of public alliances. And you are returned to your innocences, your possibilities, the abundance of your intensities. ²



Is Vida here voicing discomfort with a system that necessitates naming/defining/objectifying, whether by oneself or another?

In the two monumental photographs it is possible to read them as left/right, black and white/colour, past/present, object/subject, dead/living. Yet this is perhaps simplistic. For me, there is a sense of death in this room which culminates in Vida's own photographic objectification. If "all photographs are memento mori"³ is this a representation of the "dead" body of Vida's former self, as much a part of history as her great aunt, both (neither) past and (nor) present? The answers are here found in transcending the binary discourse which (although precariously) situates the possibilities as either/or.

The problems inherent in trying to communicate histories and identities are encountered in this exhibition, similar to the way that objectified history, as presented in Vida's (or anyone's) CV, fails to tell the whole story, recognize the scope of her (their) experience. In sharing a part of her experience through this installation, Sandra Vida inspires many questions, and presents us with indications of the paths of possible answers. But as she notes in one of the pieces of text that appear on the central video monitor, "something is always left out, something is always lost."

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1995*

THE AUTONOMOUS EYE collaboration with Pauline Cummins

There has to be a connection among women to hold onto a reality which is said within the larger world not to be real. For women to participate in society as a whole means to speak about what we know, what we feel — to speak from our experience rather than leaving behind our experience to enter society.

Carol Gilligan Q2

THE AUTONOMOUS EYE is an exploration of the medium of video through the body. And a meditation on the body through video. In this collaborative piece produced during a feminist residency at The Banff Centre, we take control of the means of viewing and representation. Using layered themes and an original vocal soundtrack, we construct an identity and a sexuality viewed through our own eyes and experienced through our own bodies. The visual, defined by the mirror image, the fragmented, fetishized body, is for women a confining cage. The work confronts the viewer with several frames within frames, inviting one to participate by looking again, by reconsidering points of view. Inspired by discussions with curator/writer Christine Ross, we consider questions: What are the mechanisms that produce the sexual discourse that positions women in patriarchal society? Is change possible? Can female artists, looking back with the power gained from shared experience, undermine the power of male framing? — and can we redefine ownership and the control of creativity?

P.C. and S.V.

Commentary by Terry Billings

THE AUTONOMOUS EYE is composed of poetically layered images of the collaborators, Sandra Vida and Pauline Cummins, working with tools of the gaze: video cameras, mirrors, eyes, and light. The video's warm, earthy palette is almost monochromatic, except for the odd flash of iris blue and some rosier flesh tones. The beauty of the layering and palette helps to recreate their bodies as light and meaning rather than as carriers of someone else's intent. Throughout this process, the meaning of their interactions with the tools and each other remains ambiguous.

French philosopher Luce Irigaray talks about the value of this kind of uncertainty in her examination of Diotima's speech in *Sorcerer Love: A Reading of Plato's Symposium*...

*She ceaselessly questions Socrates on his positions, but without, like a master, positing already established truths. And each time that Socrates thinks that he can take something as certain, she undoes his certainly. All entities, substantives, adverbs, sentences are patiently, and joyously, called into question.*¹

* Release date

1. Luce Irigaray, *Sorcerer Love: A Reading of Plato's Symposium* in *Hypatia*, Vol. 3, No 3. Winter 1989. 33,34.



TRIAD 1995

A new sexual ethics must be constructed or re-constructed. A genesis of love between the sexes has yet to come about in either the smallest or the largest sense, or in the most intimate or political guise. It is a world to be created or recreated so that man and woman may once more, or finally, live together, meet, and sometimes inhabit the same place.

Luce Irigaray Q3

THIS PROJECT REPRESENTS the coming together of several notions — the interconnection of a trio of stories. With the help of a psychologist, I had been looking into my own past and my father's death and what effect that might still have on my life choices. At the same time I was reading Freud, and feminist theory, and Celtic mythology. And I made my first trip to Ireland, following the trail of ancient legends.

For several months, I had a kind of recurring waking dream — of a woman entering a hotel with a mysterious suitcase, to meet someone. That image haunted me, and I realize now that it represented an archetypal and resonant paradigm. The secret meeting, the hidden relationship, the love triangle — repeated throughout the long history of western songs and stories. But I was also inspired by another model, perhaps a throwback to a more ancient ideal — a more positive spin on romance, on the agency of women, and the possibility of enduring love.

S.V.



TRIAD

by Amy Gogarty

INTERMEDIA ARTIST SANDRA VIDA uses her art practice to engender new stories for women. Many of her video and performance projects examine the subjectivity, agency and implication of women within the dominant patriarchal order. She asserts that inherited patterns of conventional narrative haunt and exert power over women's lives in the present, and she struggles to counter negative stereotypes with images of empowerment. Recently, Celtic culture and mythology have attracted the attention of the artist, who traces her own family roots to Scotland. Like many contemporary feminist artists, Vida excavates her heritage for insight into ways traditional narratives and archetypes shape women's unconscious expectations and desires. *Triad* reiterates the artist's commitment to grounding her work in the everyday social and in using it proactively to imagine alternative, even exemplary, models for addressing communal goals.

Celtic mythology preserves the vestigial memory of an earlier culture predating Roman rule. In *Triad*, Celtic myth, romance and autobiography converge in an intricate tapestry of love, loss and resignation. The Celtic myth of Diarmaid and Gráinne forms a central motif. In this myth, the aging Fionn, leader of the warrior clan known as the Fian, contracts to marry the reluctant and much younger Gráinne. On their wedding night, Gráinne dispenses a sleeping potion to most of the party. She then places her chosen lover, Diarmaid, under a magic bond or gessa, which compels him to elope with her. The vengeful Fionn pursues the two across Ireland, eventually retaliating by refusing to cure Diarmaid from a magical boar wound. The Irish myth inspired literary accounts such as *Tristram and Isolde* and the Arthurian legends of medieval Europe. In these romances, women are blamed for thwarting men's privileged control over their sexuality. Paradigmatic love triangles underlie Western attitudes towards sex, death and the fascination for forbidden or absent love objects. Traditionally, adulterous, "star-crossed" or thwarted love is idealized as conducive to true passion, but these forms of love presuppose patriarchal systems in which female bodies are exchanged between powerful men.

The original Irish story, however, runs counter to these dominant narratives. Gráinne shows herself to be a sexually active and desiring subject. She conspires to obstruct a patriarchal marriage that is against her own interests. The story's inconsistencies and crossed loyalties arise from conflicts between Celtic and Christian codes. Celtic religious practices in Ireland incorporated and extended the indigenous goddess-worshipping beliefs of the mythical *Tuatha Dé Danaan*, an early Irish race. In contrast to other Celtic populations in Europe, the Irish Celts were never subjugated by the Romans. Thus the ancient social order and language survived well into the Christian era, at which time pagan beliefs were recorded by clerical redactors. One can imagine what difficulties the libidinous Gráinne presented these celibate monks! Ancient Irish lore refers to sacred prostitution, sexual freedom of women in general and the legitimacy of the king's sovereignty devolving on his desirability to the reigning queen or goddess, for whom husbands were sometimes "nothing more than sleeping partners." Gráinne's "guilt," Diarmaid's broken trust and Fionn's treachery make sense only in a system endorsing male control over female sexuality in the form of monogamy and sexual submission. As Vida comments, in Western (patriarchal) literature, "happy love has no history."

The three tapes interweave fragmentary narratives and recurring symbols. On the left-hand monitor, the myth is told through images of rushing water, dark woods, a chalice, liquid running out between open fingers and a female figure dressed in a bride's white veil. On the central monitor, a contemporary narrative unfolds: a woman checks into a hotel to await a lover, who never actually appears. Slow motion dissolves, white roses, a Celtic medallion and rushing water link the story with the more impressionistically rendered myth. The contemporary narrative is riven by archetypal images, which erupt into and "haunt" the present.

The third tape focuses on Vida's father, who died when she was a teenager. Reflecting on this event as an adult, Vida recognizes the enduring effect this loss had on her own developing sexuality, self-awareness and heterosexual relationships, which have been marked by a psychic link between "love, pain, separation, guilt and loss." Feminist revisions of Freudian theory shape her understanding of the perturbation and desire that confound father/daughter relationships. In the tape, fleeting glimpses of her girlhood home, family photographs and a funeral appear on the right-hand monitor, signaling conflicting emotions of ambivalence, grief and the acceptance of loss. An image of hands holding a rock appears intermittently; near the end, the rock is dropped into rushing water. Softly focused light dapples a window shade, countering the rush of water on the other monitors. Abstract patterns imply the spontaneous drift of memory rather than logically structured narrative and introduce a personal dimension to the mythic tale. The three separate tapes are related formally by shared visual motifs and traditional Celtic music.

Significantly, *Triad* invokes three separate scenarios. In Celtic lore, multiplying images or attributes enhances their power, and a triad or triplism is understood to symbolize all multiples in general. Groups of three occur frequently with hopeful and ominous import. Convergences of three waters, triplicate deities and even three-fold deaths exaggerate and intensify the potency of symbols. Vida's manipulation of three narratives heightens the power of each. Together, they transcend the anecdotal or merely personal to engage wider issues. Vida's characters are caught up in what Elspeth Probyn, quoting Louis Althusser, has described as "the backwardnesses, forwardnesses, survivals and unevennesses of development which *co-exist* in the structure of the real historical present." Probyn elaborates, asserting that contemporary uses of autobiography and narrative must account for real conditions, which are historically contingent and never universal. In some situations, going forward might first involve a recuperation of traditional knowledge. In this process, Vida foregrounds the sway of collective myth over women's unconscious desires and real experiences. *Triad* creates a charged space for our imaginations to enter and explore. In acknowledging the power of old stories, *Triad* opens a space for imagining new ones.

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FULL CIRCLE 1997 collaborative installation with Cat Cayuga

A Nation is not conquered until the hearts of its women are on the ground

Cheyenne proverb, quoted in Cat Cayuga's videotape, "A Nation Is..."

The possibility of change requires going beyond your own parameters, shifting identities, and becoming receptive to other identities...

Jane Gallop Q4

I MET CAT CAYUGA in Toronto in 1993–94. She was working as Creative Producer/Executive Director of the Ontario Aboriginal Film & Video Art Alliance, and I was administrator of ANNPAC/RACA during its transition to the Artist-Run Network. Over coffee, or seated at a kitchen table, or in one of our offices, we talked — about our community work, but also about ourselves and our backgrounds. We travelled to the Woodland Cultural Centre in Brantford, Ontario in Six Nations territory and looked at artifacts and contemporary art. I returned to Calgary and Cat moved back to Hamilton.

For a couple of years, we discussed doing a project together that would reflect the commonalities we had discovered in our cultures' histories. Using material from each of us, we created a videotape in 1996 that would cycle as a loop as one element in the show. When we got together for an exhibition at Hamilton Artists Inc. in 1997, we sat once again at the kitchen table (in the house where Cat was now living). We brainstormed and compared notes and plans. We found an area where large trees had been cleared, some of which still lay at the site. One of them just fit into the gallery space braced between floor and ceiling, and it became the central motif that connected the other objects in the installation. We each brought into the space objects that held special significance for us. We filled four clay cooking pots (made to look like those of both the Celts and the Haudenosaunee/Iroquois) with tobacco, salt, oatmeal and water, and set them in mounds of earth. I wove long coloured ropes into a Celtic knot that connected the tree to the pots. Cat laid out beans and Indian corn in designs on the floor (which the gallery mice disturbed and ate each night!). And finally, we decided to bring in the kitchen table as well, littered with our sketches and notes. We invited viewers to journey with us for a time, and consider the benefits of sharing stories.

S.V.

PRE-CONTACT FIRST NATIONS peoples of North America and pre-Christian Celts of the British Isles possessed many similar traditions and attributes. With a strong oral tradition, both cultures were earth-based, attuned to the seasons and the elements, and saw themselves as integrated with their environment. Both cultures suffered the imposition of other cultural systems, and as they re-emerged in the contemporary context, have been framed within the stereotyping of "popularized" or commercial images. Both have been interpreted using inappropriate codes, and continue to be viewed through a distorting lens by mainstream culture.

This multi-media installation features sculptural elements, personal objects, and a flow of video images referencing our Celtic and Native traditions and contemporary concerns as women. The installation respects the ways of the past, but acknowledges that the contemporary context demands a re-thinking and re-invention of our cultural heritage. As women and as artists, drawing on the inspiration of "alternative" cultural models, we can express, through the shared language of art, things which cannot be expressed in the language of the dominant culture. Using our cultural legacies as a basis and an inspiration, and affirming the benefit of fostering unprecedented combinations and juxtapositions, we seek a common ground to produce new visions and new cultural expressions.

from Full Circle Artists' Statement



KITCHEN FREEDOM 2000

It began to seem that one would have to hold in the mind forever two ideas which seemed to be in opposition. The first idea was acceptance, the acceptance, totally without rancour, of life as it is, and men and women as they are: in the light of this idea, it goes without saying that injustice is a commonplace. But this did not mean that one could be complacent, for the second idea was of equal power: that one must never, in one's own life, accept these injustices as commonplace but must fight them with all one's strength.

James Baldwin Q5

THE INSPIRATION and starting point for this installation was a series of radio programs that my mother hosted in the 1940s, titled *The Voice that Brings You Kitchen Freedom*. For several years, my mother worked for the Canadian Western Natural Gas Company's Blue Flame Kitchen, which ran a cooking school and distributed recipes and household hints by phone and to visitors. The radio program extended this service to a mainly female listening audience.

The program was typical of the prevailing attitudes of the times — the 40s and 50s and even into the 60s — in which ads, movies and magazines delivered the message that the proper role for women was within marriage and the home. By way of compensation, women were told that their lives were being improved by advances in technology, science, and production. Exploring this territory (the familiar surroundings of my own early years) raised questions about how prescribed roles and representations of women are governed by politics and economics. In opposition to this limited view, a study of my Celtic heritage suggests that women's cultural legacy can incorporate more powerful and liberating images.

Women's lived experience is never quite in line with dictated roles — a strong current continues beneath the surface that affirms and empowers individual women and gatherings of women. In a similar way, the natural physical environment, often seen by science as irrational/feminine and in need of domination and control, has its own power and ability to survive.

During the making of this work, I renewed my admiration for those women of previous generations whose lives outwardly followed convention, but whose generosity, good humour and labour enriched the lives of their families, friends, and communities. This piece became, as well as a critique of women's restricting roles, a kind of homage to women like my mother, Betty Gibb, and my aunt, Nan Innes. This installation was presented with much respect to them, and to women throughout history who have maintained a sense of their own worth and value.

S.V.



Kitchen Freedom installation, Nickle Arts Museum, Calgary, 2000

KITCHEN FREEDOM

by Christine Sowiak

THIS HAS TAKEN A WHILE, this coming to a decision about how to approach Sandra Vida's installation. Time spent debating what I assume to know, things I have read, subjects we have talked about, the objects I have seen assembling — before realizing that perhaps the only way to approach is to walk straight in, to insert myself within the space of *Kitchen Freedom*.

I walk down a hallway past four posters, large seamless collages saturated with colour featuring women I quickly identify as housewives. In crisp dresses and cotton print aprons, the housewives stand before refrigerators and stoves, amid plates of baked goods and pot roasts, neatly typed recipe cards and floating phrases such as *low cost menus* and *taste perfection*. The housewives are impeccable, almost frightening in their obvious efficiency and productivity. They pose with implements of their work — coffee pot, serving platter, rubber gloves “*woman shall rule in the household...she shall be educated for this...only properly trained women can rise to the status for which they were destined.*”¹ A radio plays, mixing strains of big band jazz with a female voice reciting recipes and household hints, and a man's voice suggesting home improvements “*the home economics movement...preferred the appellation 'domestic science' or 'household administration' to indicate their professional standards.*”² There is a modest, orderly table — set for two, serving a balanced meal of meat, potatoes and two vegetables — perched upon a square of polished linoleum “*everything in her temple is clean, with the scientific cleanliness of a surgery, which we all know to be far ahead of any mere housewifely neatness.*”³

To the right, the four dresses belonging to the housewives hang on the wall, practical yet feminine, and I see now the words skilfully embroidered on the aprons. Buzzwords for accomplished modern housewives — sacrifice, duty, service, devotion “*socially conditioned roles prepare females to become passive, self-denying, obedient, and self-sacrificing...as well as nurturing, caring and responsible in personal situations.*”⁴ The dresses — their presence standing in, as clothes often do, for the women that would wear them — square off across the room with their partners, gleaming, streamlined stoves “*these machines are lined up in one room, the kitchen, which is often designed to be isolated from the rest of family life.*”⁵ Centrally placed, against the back wall, is a large window frame through which can be seen (a projected video image of) a hillside, a tree, and wildlife “*typical of what the housewife wanted in the 1940s was her demand for a large 'picture window' above the kitchen sink. According to statistics these windows called forth more enthusiasm than any other suggested change.*”⁶

Seemingly, entering this space places me within a very specific kitchen, the orderly, well-equipped and capable kitchen of the 1940s, domain of the expert housewife, product of the long project of modernization, and now tinged with enough nostalgia, enough distance through time to appear quaint, homey, ideal. It could easily be a description of the starting point for *Kitchen Freedom*, the kitchen of Vida's mother Betty Gibb, who was in that era both an accomplished household administrator and a professional employed by the home service department of Calgary's natural gas company.

It is obvious, though, to myself or to any other viewer, that this is not literally a kitchen but rather a conversation about a kitchen, about many kitchens...about the social construction of this space and through it, the construction of women's roles. Just as apparent should be that the walk-through outlined above is highly restricted, constrained to one reading only (deliberately leaving out, saving for later, myriad symbols and images that speak to other, alternative spaces.)

Space is not neutral, and the kitchen not merely a location within a dwelling, “a box to be filled with commodities.”⁷ Like any space, the kitchen has a history of meanings arrived at through the intersection of social processes with trajectories of personal development.⁸ The kitchen reflects societal changes, cultural shifts. Even within the past 200 years, the design of the kitchen, its shifting location within the house and the appliances it contains, document the legacy of the industrial revolution, the impact of mechanization. The modern kitchen gained freedom for women to leave the house, yet to more conservative and traditional minds, domestic innovation lent a professional status to housekeeping designed to keep women at home.⁹ It is a site of oppression, filled by advertisers with mass-produced goods and single-purpose appliances requiring frequent attention, and a full-time, at-home operator.¹⁰ It is the battleground between women and food, between her enjoyment of food and media dictates, between her own needs and pleasures and their subordination in the service of, in deference to, the requirements of others. But it hasn’t always been this way. Science and innovation have not always determined what goes on in the kitchen.

There have been alternatives... “*The history of the kitchen as we know it today is largely bound up with the growing concentration of its heat sources. The open flame of the hearth, coal within the cast iron range, gas, and finally electricity followed one another as the heating agents...their eras were of unequal length...for ages, the open flame reigned supreme.*”¹¹ ... “*while the kitchen can be seen as symbolic of women’s traditional role as housewife and mother, it can also be seen as the place where women gather to compare experiences and to strategize. More ancient associations would see the hearth as a site of women’s power — a place for sharing stories, performing rituals, healing.*”¹²

In Sandra Vida’s work there are always alternatives, it is *about* alternatives. From her first encounter with a colour photocopier in the early 1980s (yet almost certainly before that, even) Vida has been a master of the collage, of the unlikely but telling juxtapositions of image and symbol, word and meaning — both as formal device and conceptual strategy. In *Kitchen Freedom*, images meet with furniture and appliances, audio and video, portraits and projections. What we enter is an environment that alludes to but does not contain the kitchen as we know it, where the housewife performs together with all her personas and identities, those that we recognize and those that might always be unknown, even to herself. Symbols from Vida’s Celtic heritage mix with visuals from mass media, combine with images from more ancient times when the hearth was the centre of the world and women, the centre of society. *Kitchen Freedom* avoids trapping the viewer in a simple dialectic between good or bad, oppressive or emancipatory, patriarchal or matriarchal. There is more here, in the assemblage of alternatives presented to us, in the images and ideas that are at once highly personal, yet capable of having meaning for others, of describing a collective history, of suggesting an alternative present.

Very little of *Kitchen Freedom* is confined to my initial description. There are other sounds, other voices beyond the swing music and recipes; ambient sounds of water and wind. Nature songs blending with women’s voices joined in work songs. The video projected through the picture window is an uncultivated view, images of other hearths, other times: architectural ruins in Ireland, structures built in observance of nature (not for its control); symbols carved in stone celebrating the four seasons, the four elements, four directions, four stages of life and times of day; images of ancient and Celtic deities that announce nature, and rituals that honour them.

The video creates a rhythm, a feeling of balance that comes from the observation of cyclical nature. It is a lush, sensual rhythm — a feeling of being somewhat outside of time — that is achieved again in the tapes of the hearth. Slow flames flow and dance, and from within the coals emerge images, carved stone maidens and crones, women and goddesses. Flames embrace the images just as the hearths are embedded within the stoves —

one history contains another, yet everything is present. In both videos, there are hands. Women's hands, cooking, healing, conjuring. It should come as no surprise to find, in the hearth of *Kitchen Freedom*, evidence of magic, of ritual and the work of the witch, the green woman, the healer. "*There are feminist tales which view the black magic of witches as the true healing power of women...witches were revered in archaic societies as the mediators between the wilderness and society...who lived on the edge between wilderness and society.*"¹³ The witch, irrational hybrid of nature and woman, has been pushed aside and persecuted by the rational goals of modernization, yet she is present.

To be within the space of *Kitchen Freedom* is to be mesmerized, seduced by the movement of images, lulled by ambient sounds. Falling into the rhythm of the installation, accepting the accumulation of diverse images and references, one becomes attuned to links and balances within the installation. The "plates" set on the table are actually monitors set within, and the "balanced meal" appears in a cycle of production and consumption. The plates hover over images of another cycle, the natural transition of elements, while on the empty plates words appear...*desire/fear, authority/deference, power/weakness, strength/fragility*. Strangely fictitious binaries, but not unlike the slogans embroidered on the aprons and dress labels. This space is filled with the presence of women, through the dresses, through the video images. This is a space where women are talking, gesturing, performing, communicating, comforting, wordlessly giving and gaining strength.

As I leave the installation, I look again at the housewives in the posters — composites, really, of the artist and her mother. She brandishes not just a coffee pot, but also a sword, a fire, a horned snake. She is set in front of a stove but also within nature, placed amongst devilled eggs and Wonderbread yet also surrounded by ancient symbols and familiars. And now, I can understand the serene strength of the housewife, her enigmatic smile. This is her domain, the accumulation of all possible conceptions of kitchen and hearth, battleground and site of history, strength, and wisdom.

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2. Gwendolyn Wright. *Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1989. 158.
3. Isabell McDougall. "An Ideal Kitchen," *The House Beautiful* 13. December 1902. 27.
4. Jack Zipes. *Don't Bet on the Prince: Contemporary Feminist Fairy Tales in North America and England*. New York: Methuen, 1986. 3.
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6. Giedion, 617.
7. Hayden, 50.
8. Richard A. Etlin. "Space, stone and spirit: the meaning of place," in Sue Golding, *The Eight Technologies of Otherness*. New York: Routledge, 1997. 306–319.
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12. Sandra Vida, artist's statement 1999.
13. Zipes, 25.



HEARTH AND HOME 2002

I WAS INVITED by curator John Will to exhibit with Jim Goertz in the 2002 Calgary *Art City* festival. Recycling a portion of an earlier installation, I placed four stoves with video monitors at intervals throughout the “forest” of greenery in the gardens. By placing the stoves within the downtown garden setting, I referred more specifically to the ancient importance of the hearth, with the “outdoor” setting creating a new framework of associations, lending a new resonance to the *Hearth and Home* installation.

S.V.

John Will: Curatorial Statement (excerpt)

THE EXPANDING PARAMETERS of sculpture in the 1960s began accommodating and incorporating elements of performance and installation which often included video components. Hybrid artists continued to exhibit in gallery spaces and also began showing in spaces that were site-specific to their work. One of these site-specific opportunities for artists occurred in Calgary’s Devonian Gardens. In conjunction with Calgary’s annual ten day *Art City* festival, the administration of the Gardens, in cooperation with the Calgary Allied Arts Foundation, invited two projects to be installed in the Gardens for the duration of the festival.

The Devonian Gardens is a large public area situated on the fourth floor in the Toronto Dominion complex in downtown Calgary. The Gardens are adjacent to shopping malls and offices and contain walkways, bridges, benches, ponds with fish in them and, by definition, a very large selection of plants and flowers. For the festival, long-time members of EMMedia, Sandra Vida and Jim Goertz, exhibited site-specific, non-traditional works in the Gardens, and although their installations are not exclusively video works, both works do have a primary video component. Vida’s and Goertz’s combination of video and other elements confront the audience and are meant to trigger responses that will inevitably vary from person to person. Some viewers may simply wonder what such things are doing there. Some may find the works beautiful. Some may find them mysterious or even ridiculous while others may find them stimulating and thought provoking. The hippest of the mall rats will find them “cool”.

Sandra Vida’s piece, entitled *Hearth and Home* was originally a component of her larger installation, *Kitchen Freedom* shown at The Nickle Arts Museum in 2000. In that installation Vida drew attention to her ongoing concerns with feminist issues including biography, gender roles and stereotypes. In the Devonian “outdoor-indoor” environment, four kitchen stoves, each containing a video monitor, are situated throughout the Gardens in and around the plethora of flora. The image on Vida’s tape is one of flames from either a fireplace or campfire. Recurring images of Celtic sculpture depicting female deities and womens’ hands doing cooking tasks and performing other rituals periodically fade in and out of the flames. *Hearth and Home* in the Gardens context is more open ended than it was in *Kitchen Freedom* and, being accessible to many non-art gallery-going visitors, is open to a myriad of interpretations.



BOWER 2005

We could say that culture is a set of stories we tell each other again and again. These stories have shapes. The shapes of the stories — not the characters, the setting, or the details — shape our expectations and our actions. It may be helpful to look at some of the stories that underlie modern Western culture, for only when we recognize them and see their implications, the structures they create in us, can we be free to change them.

Starhawk (Miriam Samos) Q6

UMBERTO ECO has said that “all the problems of the Western world emerged in the middle ages.” My research, travel, and reading on that time period brought me to a particular point in the history of the British Isles — the moment when the meaning of “the bower” changed drastically for women, the time when the old religion of the Celts was displaced by Christianity and the codes of *amour courtois* (courtly love). Women who had once held powerful roles as leaders, warriors, and healers began to be confined to domestic life — “captured” within the medieval castle. It was an era in which women were both revered as untouchable virginal beings, and persecuted as witches.

The word /concept “bower” appeals to me because of its wide range of associations and layers of meaning. The term can refer to either a garden space within a constructed living space (a natural space within the domestic world) or an area of the natural world enclosed and defined as a space for human dwelling, ceremony, or ritual. A favourite book of mine as a young woman was *The Secret Garden*, in which an enclosed garden is a symbol for privacy, growth and healing. In a medieval castle, the bower was defined as a woman’s private space, related to the later word *boudoir*, which carries connotations of privacy and intimacy.

The bower is haunted by folktales, legends and myths which have special resonance for women. The ancient Celts worshipped in open-air groves called *fidnemed* by the Celts and *nemeton* by the Gauls and Britons, where both men and women might lead the rituals. Those who observed “the old religion” of the Celts into the middle ages (mainly women meeting secretly outdoors) were severely persecuted for retaining their beliefs, yet the ancient knowledge survived as a closely-guarded secret, or merged with dominant cultural forms.

The tales of courtly love saw the walled garden as a metaphor for the defences of the lady who must be won by valiant struggle (an ancient version of the *Sleeping Beauty* story). In such courtly works as the *Roman de La Rose*, contradictory meanings are offered — the two authors of the work define the search for true love (the achievement of the perfect rose within the garden) as either a holy or a carnal pursuit.

In a more contemporary context, the bower as a site is related to the tension between “space” — a supposedly neutral area — and “place” — a site imbued with meaning, both personal and cultural. As a “woman’s place” it can be seen as either a personally-defined territory or a pleasantly-appointed prison.

S.V

SANDRA VIDA'S BOWER

by Rosemary Brown

SANDRA VIDA'S VIDEO INSTALLATION *Bower* transformed EMMEDIA's viewing room into a portal to another age. All was dark, and before us a young girl, then a woman and finally a crone lay dreaming, and in dreaming, remembering a distant past when open forests and hills were the domain of women, a time when women led the sacred rituals, and a time before goddesses were supplanted by saints.

Three arched window openings provided an effective framing device for the women's dreams — a richly textured composite of shifting images: the hills and woodlands of Ireland, statues of the goddess Brigit, sheela-na-gigs, and triple spirals, all gradually overlaid with walled towns and gardens, medieval ladies and knights, saints, courtiers, and monks.

The soundtrack mirrored these shifts as wind, birdcalls and mystical Celtic music surrendered to courtly airs and ecclesiastical choirs. Then suddenly the crackle of fire, the call of a raven and as women set burning woven baskets into a stream, we heard floating in the air a poem recited in Gaelic. We didn't understand the words but hearing this expressive language suppressed over the ages and almost lost, was moving and empowering, as was the re-emergence of goddess symbols in the women's dreams.

Psychotherapist Edward Whitmont wrote: "The magical, mythological, and feminine ways of dealing with existence left behind thousands of years ago must now be reclaimed by consciousness."¹ Sandra Vida's *Bower* gracefully contributes to this reclamation.

1. Quoted in Elinor Gadon. *The Once and Future Goddess: A Symbol for Our Time*. San Francisco: Harper, 1989. 375.





2005 . . .

THE WOOD BOWER

a performative installation and video document

IN A KIND OF recurring performance as part of my practice, I have constructed small hut structures in the woods that are also referred to as bowers. The first bower I constructed was during a residency at the Tyrone Guthrie Centre at Annaghmakerrig in County Monaghan in Ireland in October, 2003. The bower in the woods was an adjunct to (or more precisely a process I undertook in relation to) the larger project I worked on during my stay, the multi-media installation called *Bower*.

The bower shape and construction is a reference to early Neolithic and Celtic shelters and boats, which would have had stretched skins over the basic “inverted-basket” construction. Boats built in this way (called coracles in Scotland, currachs in Ireland, cwrwgl in Wales) can still be found to this day. Almost every ancient culture, of course, where trees or bushes were plentiful, employed some form of basketry — for everything from cradles to cooking pots to carrying cases to coffins; basket construction pre-dates cloth, clay or any other type of construction. When I build this ancient structure of the bower in the woods, I intrude in that space as little as I can. The structure is the largest that I can build alone without assistance, and is therefore just the size in which I can sit or lie down. The wood bower has become a site for meditation and exploration that informs my ongoing work.

I constructed another bower, this time made of spruce boughs, for the *CampSites* exhibition at the Walter Phillips Gallery in Banff in the summer of 2005. In Banff, the arch of the bower doorway is oriented to the West partly because of the site I chose, which faces the path and the visible mountains, but also to pay homage to Celtic associations of the West with the Crone, Water, Autumn, the Evening, and the latter part of life. While I sat in the bower each day once it was finished, I meditated not only on the forest and the location, but on these concepts as well.

An accompanying videotape shown in the gallery documented the building of the first bower I constructed in Ireland. It traces some of the ancient structures that inspired the piece, and some of the particular aspects of building the art work in that location.

S.V.



THREADS 2007

Moving from silence into speech is, for the oppressed, the colonized, the exploited, and those who stand and struggle by their side... a gesture of defiance that heals, that makes new life and new growth possible.

bell hooks Q7

THIS PROJECT ARISES from aspects of my Scottish family history, in the time period before the Struthers/Cunningham clan moved to Canada (1908), and follows from research first undertaken during my residency in Glasgow in 1990. My great-grandmother and her sister were child workers in the Glasgow cotton mills, while my great-grandfather and his father before him worked in the shipyards there.

I began to reflect on the hidden side of the cotton industry — the exploitation of workers both in Britain and in the Americas (the slave labour that fuelled cotton's production). This led to the creation of *Threads*, a multi-media meditation on those concerns. This two-channel installation presents a series of abstract images that appear pleasant on the surface, but suggest a contrary hidden story.

While my starting point was the past, one can see contemporary equivalence in the growing use of “off-shore” (i.e. the cheapest) workforces employed by global big business, a practice that similarly undervalues human lives within the cold statistics of profits and production quotas.

Contemporary society is haunted by the legacy of oppression and exploitation in the past, echoes of which linger into the present. Uncovering and remembering can be a beginning. I believe (now more than ever) that there is an urgent need for new alliances, across historical barriers, to address contemporary issues — to take action to change the patterns that perpetuate injustice.

S.V.



THREADS

by Kay Burns

THREADS, SANDRA VIDA'S most recent installation, is aptly named. Not only for the imagery and connections to the cotton industry, but through the metaphorical implications of tying things together. Like those small pieces of string saved and preserved by thrifty individuals, *Threads* ties together aspects of her earlier work into a new whole, a kind of culmination of ideas and issues rejoined.

Vida's earlier work alluding to ancestral connections began with *...near where my great aunt was born*; ideas of women's history and Celtic ritual are explored in several works such as *Kitchen Freedom* and *Bower*. All of her work has in some way addressed social issues, social constructions and perceptions, and has explored experiences of those who are marginalized. *Threads* arises from Vida's Scottish ancestry: In the 18th century members of her family were evicted from their home in Lanarkshire south of Glasgow as a result of a political agenda at the time to bring in large scale farming to the region. The next generation moved to Glasgow in the following century as the Industrial Revolution continued to redefine work and labour in an unprecedented way. Her family found themselves in the slums of Glasgow with the women and children working in the newly industrialized cotton factories and the men in the Clydebank shipyards.

Reflecting on these elements of her family's history while exploring the streets of Glasgow led Vida to consider the cotton industry's close connection to the slave trade. Ships that brought the raw cotton from America to the British cotton-weaving factories followed a triangular route — the ship's trip back to America entailed stops in ports along the coast of Africa

to pick up Africans who were forced into working for the cotton farming industry in America. Certainly the invention of the cotton gin and other faster machinery led to the need for more workers, a necessity for commerce but with little concern for the human element. Vida's recognition of this connection led to her own discomfort about her ancestors' unwitting entanglement in this history and provided the motivation for this piece.

This element of discomfort brings to the surface numerous questions about how the seemingly advantaged races of British and European descent can reconcile the atrocities of the past in which our ancestors are somehow implicated, knowingly or not. Without question, many artists of colour have explored and addressed their histories of oppression, but how do those with possible connections to the oppressors, address these issues? For Vida, the answer is one of defying complicity, recognizing the issues, and refusing to think that the past should be forgotten, but instead acting as a kind of ally and spokesperson through the creation of art. Vida recognizes the past and seeks to find a positive role for her work through activism, to find a way to build bridges between ideas, and to tie together things in new ways for new insights that can allow for change in the present.

In conversation with Vida about these ideas in her work she stated: "I think the current discussion needs to be about finding areas of common ground, empathy, and not being afraid to take those steps to articulate our position and how we might redress historic wrongs. Owning blame, of course, but then what...? At one level, my work is about seeing through the pleasant surface of things to see what lies beneath. It is so important that those 'other' stories be told."

Threads is a three-channel video installation (one projected on the wall, two projected from above onto a bolt of cotton fabric) that includes imagery of flowing water and cotton processing machinery. It is a layered image that on the surface has an elegant and beautiful aesthetic that obscures hidden stories of exploitation — child workers in Great Britain, forced displacement in many contexts, and the enslavement of Africans. These hidden aspects are alluded to subtly through the imagery of hands working, through the wake of a boat in the water suggesting movement across oceans and the necessity of shipbuilding, and the rhythmic pacing of machinery implying the passage of time and monotony of factory life.

Within this work Vida has brought to the fore issues that are awkward to address. There are questions of entitlement, of point of view. Vida states, "there is a place for those who are 'privileged' to take part in the struggle to move beyond exploitation and exclusion. About building alliances based on understanding oppression. It was my Indigenous friends who challenged me to go into my own history, to find out who I was and where I came from. And that has been a rich source for my work for many years....and an encitement to further activism." Through *Threads* Vida seeks to tie together these diverse issues and ideas, and to confront things still being downplayed in the public eye. She offers a voice for others combined with her own voice, and offers it from a point-of-view that is in itself a precarious position. In *Threads* she weaves together new ideas that are entwined with the weft of past works, past ideas, and past lives; twisted together in an alternative way to touch on issues of pain and reconciliation.



Performance: *Fixing the Price*, 1989



Performance: *Learning to Dance and Other Lessons*, 1990

SANDRA VIDA

WORK / COMMUNITY CHRONOLOGY

- 1947 Born in Calgary
- 1965 Graduated (with honours) Central High School
- 1966–68 Involved in peace groups at University of Calgary, performed in singing duo with Randie Lind
- 1967 Student summer work program and collective management of Ergo Coffeehouse, Toronto
- 1968 Graduated from University of Calgary, B.A. (with distinction) in English/Art
- 1972–75 Studio in Vancouver, fabric and clothing design
- 1970s Active member of early artist-run initiatives — studios in Premier Laundry Workshop, Dandelion Studios and Gallery, Calgary
- 1978–80 Taught adult art classes (City of Calgary recreation department); textiles (Alberta College of Art)
- 1978 Began work at Clouds 'n' Water Gallery as gallery assistant
- 1980–95 Administrative Coordinator, Off Centre Centre /The New Gallery, Calgary — with board of Calgary artists, organized regular events and exhibitions, initiated and managed local, national, and international art projects, liaison with other arts groups, advocacy for artists.
Taught professional practice workshops with art students and arts groups in long-range planning, defining objectives, writing proposals and business plans.
- 1980–92 Regional representative to ANNPAC/RACA (Association of National Non-Profit Artists' Centres/ Régroupement d'Artistes des Centres Alternatifs); Initiator and President of PARCA (Prairie Artist-run Centre Association)
- 1980–2000 Participation on boards and committees including: the Alberta Association of Art Galleries; Calgary's annual Art Walk (now annual ArtCity festival); Calgary Society of Independent Filmmakers (CSIF), Calgary Aboriginal Awareness Society; Calgary Professional Arts Association; writer for Vanguard and Artichoke magazines (now defunct).
- 1992 Name changed from Sandra Tivy to Sandra Vida
- 1993–95 Administrator, ANNPAC/RACA, Toronto, during its transformation to the Artist-Run Network/ Le Réseau d'Artistes Autogéré — worked on behalf of members to raise the profile of artist-run culture. With the cross-cultural animating team, supported an initiative to address cultural equity in the organization, and rebuild a more open and diverse national network.
- 1997–99 Curatorial Coordinator, Walter Phillips Gallery, The Banff Centre for the Arts — organized exhibitions, artist visits and lectures for an eight-month contract, with Arts Director Jon Tupper
- 1996–97 Summer New Media Workshop Coordinator, The Banff Centre for the Arts — coordinated workshops, and events including "cyber-café", with Artistic Director Sara Diamond
- 1997–2001 Coordinator, Markin-Flanagan Distinguished Writers Programme — part-time contract to writer-in-residence program with Dean of Humanities and volunteer board, University of Calgary
- 1997–2003 Project research and fund-raising, Aboriginal Arts Program, The Banff Centre — with artistic director Marrie Mumford and work teams working on proposals and special projects
- 2001 Project Coordinator, ACAD Career Centre — organized workshops, conferences, and career fair with director Monte Greenshields
- 2002 Fund Developer, *herland* feminist film & video celebration — researched and sought funding for herland's activities with Sharon Stevens
- 2003 Joined Calgary's activist social justice group The Raging Grannies
- Current Freelance arts administration, management, and consultation; peer assessment committees for the Canada Council, Alberta Foundation for the Arts, Manitoba Arts Council, Saskatchewan Arts Council; speaker at local, national, and international conferences; writer for local and regional magazines including *FastForward*, *Legacy*, *Border Crossings*; studying the Gaelic language; upgrading skills on computer and video programs

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS / ART PROJECTS

- 1970s Exhibited textile work locally and nationally
- 1978 *Two-Person Show* of textile works with Barbara Leighton, Dandelion Gallery, Calgary
- 1980 *Present Tense*, Alberta Arts Foundation Purchases, Nickle Arts Museum, Calgary
- 1981 *Some Calgary Artists*, curated exhibition. Latitude 53, Edmonton
- 1982 *One-Person Show*, colour photocopy works, Centre Eye Gallery, Calgary
Staff Show, Alberta College of Art Gallery, Calgary
Hand/Machine Made, juried national show of colour copy works, Beaver House Gallery, Edmonton
- 1983 *Bits and Pieces*, one-person exhibition, colour copy works, Peter Whyte Gallery, curator Edward Cavell, Banff, Alberta
- 1984 *Immediate Art*, invitational national exhibition of alternative photo work, Burlington Arts Centre, Ontario
3 Days and 3 Nights in 3 Minutes, animated super-8 film, Free Three Minutes screening, CSIF, Calgary
- 1985 *Self-Portraits/Split Personalities*, two-person show with Don Mabie, installation, Centre Eye Gallery, Calgary
Arbeiten von Canada, photocopy work at the Museum fur Photokopie, Mulheim
Medium Photocopy curated group exhibition of German and Canadian artists, tour to Mulheim, Pforzheim, Rosenheim, the Kunstlerhaus, Stuttgart (Germany) and Centre Saidye Bronfman, Montreal
The First Ten: The Exhibition, curated exhibition for Off Centre Centre's tenth anniversary, Calgary
Kalgar/Kassel, two-person show with Don Mabie, ArtSpace, Kassel, Germany
- 1986 *Male/Female* performance, Off Centre Centre, Calgary
Performance Package, Neutral Ground, with Don Mabie and Jurgen Olbrich, Regina, Saskatchewan
Miss Barclay's Lesson performance, Off Centre Centre, Calgary
- 1987 *The Diary Exhibition*, curated national group exhibition, Art Gallery of Memorial University, St. Johns, Newfoundland (also at Stewart Hall, Pointe-Claire, Quebec, and at Mackenzie Art Gallery, Regina).
Ten Canadians, touring exhibition, Centro Lavoro Arte, Milan, Italy; Stuttgart, Germany, ArtSpace, Kassel, Germany
- 1988 *Projected Images*, Special Production Project, animated super-8 film, premiere screening, CSIF, Calgary
- Winter Souvenir*, art project with international artists as part of XV Olympic Winter Games, Calgary
- Works 88* festival, Male/Female performance presented, Latitude 53, Edmonton
Copy-Art, curated show of international artists, Kunstlerhaus, Zurich, Switzerland
Love/Hate, performance, Studio-a-Go-Go, Calgary
- 1989 *Fixing The Price*, performance, Raum-F, Zurich, Switzerland
In-Sight Edmonton Women's Film And Video Festival, screening of *Dialogue... to be continued*
Video from the South, videotape *Dialogue...to be continued*, curator Vera Lemechay
Glenbow Museum, Calgary
Vamoose, performance tour to AKA, Saskatoon, and the Venue, Regina, with Nelson Henricks, Colleen Kerr, Steve Heimbecker
Hinton Film and Video Festival, *Dialogue...to be continued* screened
- 1990 *High Performance Rodeo*, performance, *Fixing The Price*, One Yellow Rabbit Secret Theatre, Calgary
Video West, videotape *Bodies of Fate* — video series Muttart Art Gallery, Calgary, curator Kay Burns
Residency and street performances, international artist studio, City Of Culture Festival, Glasgow, Scotland
Gorilla/Guerilla, performance, opening of *Glasgow Girls* Exhibition, Kelvingrove Museum, Glasgow
Learning to Dance and Other Lessons performance; *Men at Work* installation, Raum-F, Zurich, Switzerland
Film & Video Alliance Mediatheque, screening of videotape *Angelus Intimus*
- 1991 *Angelus Intimus*, premiere video screening, Open Country Books, Calgary
Field Study, outdoor video installation in *From This Broken Hill*, Graceland Junkyard, Calgary
Camera Obscura: *Bodies of Fate* screened as part of on-air artists' television project
- 1992 *Ceremony Of Ashes*, video Installation, Open Country Books, Calgary
Mz Frankenstein, performance, with Tanya Mars and Colleen Kerr, The New Gallery
New Visions Glasgow, video screening of *Angelus Intimus*
Ceremony, name-changing performance, Tunnel/Sleeping Buffalo Mountain, Banff, Alberta
Nature as Artifact, video Installation, curated by Kitty Scott, Edmonton Art Gallery, Edmonton
...near where my great aunt was born, multi-media installation, Muttart Gallery, Calgary, curator Franklyn Heisler
The Instability of the Feminist Subject, art studio residency, curator Christine Ross, the Banff Centre, Fall
Ceremony II, video installation, Earth Day celebrations, Prince's Island, Calgary

- 1993 Two-week workshop in Creative *Non-Fiction* with Susan Crean, North Vancouver
Airwave To Midnight, juried series presented by Access TV and Alberta Culture
Bringing The Future Close, group exhibition, curator Diane Pugen, Workscene
 Gallery, Toronto
- 1994 Week-long workshop in Ontario with filmmaker Phillip Hoffman
 Screening of recent video works, V-Tape, Toronto
- 1995 *Canadian Video* exhibition, curator Nina Czegledy, tour of Europe
Artist-in Residence, EM/Media, Calgary, screening of Triad 3-channel video
Triad screening, Glenbow Museum, Calgary
- 1996 *herland* film festival, premiere screening of *The Autonomous Eye*, Calgary
Pop, Mass & Sub Cultures, art studio residency, The Banff Centre
Triad installation, Artwalk, EM/Media, Calgary
 Artist Residency with Pauline Cummins, MAWA, Winnipeg; Articule, Montreal
- 1997 *Full Circle*, video Installation with Cat Cayuga, Hamilton Artists Inc., Hamilton, Ontario
Mixed Media, two person show of digital collage with Kevin Jordan,
 Deacon Ulrich Fine Arts, Calgary
- 2000 *Kitchen Freedom*, solo multi-media exhibition, Nickle Arts Museum, Calgary,
 curator Christine Sowiak
Silver, 25th anniversary group exhibition, The New Gallery, Calgary
- 2002 *Hearth and Home*, two-person ArtCity show with Jim Goertz, curator John Will,
 Devonian Gardens, Calgary
- 2003 *Transportale*, international public art exhibition, Nordbahnhof, Berlin.
Artist Residency, Tyrone Guthrie Centre, Annaghmakerrig, Ireland,
 curator Sheila Pratschke
- 2005 *The Wood Bower*, performative installation, and video document, CAMPSites
 exhibition, curator Melanie Townsend, Walter Phillips Gallery, Banff
Bower multi-media installation premieres at EMMedia
At the End of the Pipeline, video exhibition curated by Nelson Henricks, EMMedia
 Calgary
- 2006 *Bower* multi-media installation shown at WORKS festival, Edmonton
Stellar Femme Fest, exhibition of *Celebrating Women* digital portraits, EMMedia,
 curator Laura Leif
Residency and Workshops, Orkney, Scotland; Glasgow, Scotland;
 Annaghmakerrig, Ireland
- 2007 *Artist-in-Residence* at EMMedia; Threads premieres at EMMedia, Calgary
Sandra Vida: Vision and Voice book launch at EMMedia



MEDIA ART WORKS CHRONOLOGY AND CREDITS

- 1984 *3 Days and 3 Nights in 3 Minutes*, animated super-8 film, colour, 3 minutes
produced at Calgary Society of Independent Filmmakers (CSIF)
music: Don Stein; production assistance: Andy Jaremko, Marcella Bienvenue
premiered at CSIF screening room
- 1988 *Bodies of Fate* — videotape, colour, 15 minutes
camera assistance: Nelson Henricks
Video West, Muttart Gallery
- 1989 *Dialogue...to be continued*, videotape, colour, 17 minutes
camera: Rob Milthorp
performers: Randie Lind, Sandra Vida
editing and sound assistance: Colleen Kerr, Nelson Henricks
Video from the South, Glenbow Museum, Calgary
- Projected Images*, animated super-8 film, colour, 10 minutes
produced as a Special Production Project with CSIF, Calgary
production assistance: Marcella Bienvenue, Walter Shepherd, Andy Jaremko
premiered at CSIF Screening Room
- 1991 *Angelus Intimus* — videotape, colour and black and white, 14 minutes
performers: Adrian Fisher, Cam Millar, Bob Scurlock, Franklyn Heisler, Sandra Vida
sound: Bob Scurlock; production assistance: Pam Jennings, Jim Goertz, Nelson Henricks
camera assistance: Jackson Mitchell
premiered at Open Country Books, Calgary
- Field Study* — video installation, colour, 2- hour loop
monitor mounted on plinth in junkyard
Graceland Art Rodeo, Graceland junkyard Calgary
- 1992 *Ceremony of Ashes*. video installation. colour. 10 minute loop.
monitor, tree stump, sawdust, pennies, bones
Open Country Books; Earth Day Prince's Island
- Conversation Piece*, videotape, black and white, 6 minutes
collaboration with English artist Charlie Holmes
sound: Steve Heimbecker
- ...near where my great aunt was born*, multi-media installation
3 video monitors, 12 small framed video stills, 2 large photo prints
camera assistance: Jurgen Kierspel; Richard Lomas
premiered at Muttart Art Gallery, Calgary
also completed as solo videotape, *being seen...disappearing*, 1993
- 1995 (release) *The Autonomous Eye*. colour, 5:10 minutes
collaboration with Irish artist Pauline Cummins
produced at The Banff Centre and EM/Media
- editing assistance: Vern Hume
premiered at *herland film festival*
- Triad*, 3-channel video installation, colour and black and white, 15 minutes
produced at EMMedia as artist-in-residence
performers: Marcella Bienvenue, Sandra Vida
music: Gwen McGregor and Lewis Nicholson, Walter MacDonald, Sean Buckley
camera assistance: Jim Goertz, Pauline Cummins, Mardy Roberts
production assistance: Jim Goertz, John Freebury; sound: Ken Doren
premiered at Glenbow Museum, Calgary
- 1997 *Full Circle*. multi-media installation produced during residency at The Banff Centre
collaboration with First Nations artist Cat Cayuga.
table, 2 chairs, video monitor, ceramic pots, natural materials
premiered at Hamilton Artists' Inc., Hamilton, Ontario
- 2000 *Kitchen Freedom* — multi-media installation, 2 soundtracks
digital prints, linoleum floor, stoves and table with inset monitors, window with rear projection,
ceramic pots, dresses and aprons, radio
radio voices: Marg Sanden, Monte Greenshields
premiered at Nickle Arts Museum, Calgary
- 2003 *Hearth and Home*, video installation, two-person exhibition with Jim Goertz
stoves and monitors
installation assistance: John Will, Tim Christison, Shelley Ouellet
Devonian Gardens in Calgary for *ArtCity* festival
- 2005 *Bower*, 2-channel video installation with sculptural elements and soundtrack
digital prints, table with roses and candles, projection on raised platform, projection on back wall
performers: Elizabeth Clark, Bridget Linder, Susan Stratton, Mary Montague, Sheila Pratschke,
Sandra Vida, Angie Grimes
camera assistance: Pauline Cummins; voice: Deirdre Mc Mahon
production assistance: Keith Murray
produced with assistance from EMMedia Finishing Funds Award;
premiered at EMMedia, Calgary
- 2006 *The Wood Bower*, performative installation and video document
Celtic hut structure built from boughs in woods as site for meditation
original beech wood bower built at the Tyrone Guthrie Centre at Annaghmakerrig, Ireland
spruce bower and video document in *CampSites* exhibition, Walter Phillips Gallery, Banff
- 2007 *Threads*, 2-channel video installation with sculptural elements and soundtrack
assistance: Brian Batista, Arya Boustani, Kari McQueen, Peter Curtis Morgan, Keith Murray
produced at EMMedia as artist-in-residence: premiered at EMMedia

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS CURATED / FACILITATED

- 1984 *Project/Product*, exhibition of artist books, Off Centre Centre
- 1985 *5 + 5*, exhibition of established and emerging Calgary artists, Off Centre Centre
- 1988 *Media Blitz* festival, exhibition of film, video, and performance, various locations and TNG, CSIF, ACA, EMMedia
- 1989 *Media Blitz II* festival, exhibition of film, video, and performance, various locations and TNG, with Alberta College of Art (ACA), Calgary Society of Independent Filmmakers (CSIF), EMMedia
- 1990 *Locations National*, exhibition of site-specific works in Calgary linked to a national exhibition
- 1991 *Pulse*, exhibition of new media works, various locations & The New Galllery (TNG), Calgary
Mentoring, an exhibition of work by participants in Winnipeg's *Manitoba Artists for Women's Art* (MAWA), The New Gallery, Calgary
- 1993 *It's a Cultural Thing*, with Cheryl L'Hirondelle and the Minquon Panchayat, national conference
- 1994 *Ingminirraqtuq* exhibition by ten Inuit women, with curator Ruby Arngna'naaq and Jack Butler
- 1996 *Aboriginal Film and Video Festival*, for the Calgary Aboriginal Awareness Society, with Denise Lonechild
- 2000 *Got Lost: A'jana'zhaya*, curatorial coordinator for an exhibition of Yukon artists, with Tlingit curator Ann Smith. Walter Phillips Gallery, The Banff Centre
- 2003–2005 *Locus Suspectus...where the hidden come to light*, video exhibition with Pauline Cummins, research supported by the Canada Council, *Paved*, Saskatoon. Exhibitions at *Ormeau Baths Gallery*, Belfast April 2004; *Truck Gallery*, Calgary, Fall 2004; *Paved*, Saskatoon, Spring 2005

SELECTED AWARDS

- Ontario Arts Council Grant — 1993
- Alberta Community Development Study Grant — 1993
- Artist in Residence, EMMedia, Calgary — 1995, 2007
- Canada Council Project / Production / Travel Grants — 1993, 1994, 1996, 2002, 2006
- Alberta Foundation for the Arts Project Grants — 1996, 1997, 2000, 2003, 2005
- Photographers Gallery/Video Verité Research Award — 2002
- Quinlan Road Foundation Residency Award, Annaghmakerrig, Ireland — 2003
- Epcor Established Arts Award, Mayor's Luncheon for Business and the Arts, Calgary, 2005
- Nomination for Governor-General's Award, Media and Visual Arts — 2005
- EMMedia Finishing Funds Award — 2005

SELECTED WRITING

- 1984 *Art and Politics*, panel speaker at ANNPAC/RACA conference, Kingston, Ontario
Production and the Axis of Sexuality: Banff Centre, Vanguard magazine, Fall. 13.
- 1985 *Joice Hall* review, Vanguard, April, 48.
- 1987 *In From the Cold*, article on feminist art in the Prairies, Parallelogramme, Toronto.
- 1986 *Performance Focus*, panel speaker/performance, Second Story Gallery, Calgary
Mary Scott, review, exhibition at Whyte Museum, Banff. Vanguard, Spring, 35.
- 1988 *ManWoman* catalogue essay, Off Centre Centre, Calgary
Joice Hall catalogue essay, Southern Alberta Art Gallery (SAAG), Lethbridge: Nickle Arts Museum, Calgary
Barbara Milne catalogue essay, SAAG, Lethbridge
Media Blitz catalogue essay, The New Gallery, Calgary. 1–4.
- 1989 *Media Blitz 2* catalogue essay, The New Gallery, Calgary. 3–7.
- 1991 *The Climate Of The Community*, slide/text/video presentation, Plains Film and Video Conference, Edmonton
Women, Ladies, and Girls, article on Glasgow residency, Artichoke magazine, Calgary, Fall/Winter. 8–13.
Somewhere Else Instead, slide/text/video presentation. Where To? conference, Edmonton Art Gallery, Edmonton
- 1992 *In-Sight Festival*, guest speaker, moderator Sara Diamond, Edmonton
Anne-Marie Bénéteau, Insomnia, review, Fuse, Winter. 41–42.
- 1994 “Passages: Rita McKeough’s Art and Life in Alberta,” *Rita McKeough: an excavation*, curator Annette Hurtig. Calgary: Glenbow Press. 69–75.
The Ingminirraqtuq Project/Le projet Ingminirraqtuq, Parallelogramme Vol.19, No. 4. 40–44.
- 1995 “Art and its Gatekeepers,” presentation/essay, *Freedom Within the Margins*, editors C. Pizanas and J.S. Frideres, Calgary: Detselig, 259–263
- 2001 *Multiples: Tsa’de yoh do’s*, review of exhibition, Walter Phillips Gallery, Banff. Border Crossings, Issue 80. 67–68.
Go Tell it on the Mountain, review of Wheeler Hut Exhibition, Whyte Museum, Banff. Border Crossings, Issue 79. 80–81.
- 2003 *Art and Activism, The Journey of Joane Cardinal-Schubert*, cover article, Legacy, Winter. 11–14.
Passages, review of Ellen Moffat/ Joyce Ryckman at Truck gallery, BlackFlash magazine, Vol. 20.1
Mapping Our Territories, review of exhibition, Walter Phillips Gallery, Banff, Border Crossings, Winter Issue. 64–65.
Nitsitapiisinni: Through Blackfoot Eyes, review of new Blackfoot Gallery at Glenbow Museum, Legacy, Summer. 13–14.
- 2004 *Coming to Video — A Canadian Perspective, Locus Suspectus* Catalogue, Calgary/Belfast
Super Modern World of Beauty, review of exhibition, curator Diana Sherlock, Artichoke, Spring. 26–29.
Taking Apart Art: Stamp, Scott and Gurney challenge artistic process, FastForward, March 18. 38
- 2005 *Roy Kiyooka and the Ardour of Displacement*, article on Kiyooka’s Vancouver years, BlackFlash, Vol. 23.1. 6–13.
- 2007 *Art and Community: Invention and Intervention*, essay in EMMedia 25th anniversary catalogue
Introduction, In-Between catalogue, Farheen Haq/K.C. Adams exhibition, Truck Gallery, Calgary

SELECTED MEDIA COVERAGE / ARTICLES / REVIEWS / BOOKS

- 1982 *Sandra Tivy, colour Xerox works of art*, review of Centre Eye exhibition, Nancy Tousley, The Calgary Herald, September 23. F4
- 1983 *Profiles*, Patti Seaman, feature article, Last Issue magazine, Calgary
- 1984 *Sandra Tivy at Peter Whyte Gallery*, Mary-Beth Laviolette, Vanguard, February. 45.
- 1985 *The First Ten: The Catalogue*, Off Centre Centre, Calgary
Don Mabie Sandra Tivy, Centre Eye, review, Barbara Fischer, Vanguard magazine, April. 41.
Kunst: Konigreich ohne Schwert, review of exhibition, Photo-copy Museum, Mulheim: The Mulheimer Nachrichten.
- 1986 *Artist lives in walk in collage*, article on studio practice, Nancy Tousely, The Calgary Herald. November 23. A21.
Aus Schlichten Kopien Wird Original-Grafik, review of *Medium Photocopy*, Stuttgart, Germany
- 1987 *Réproduire, C'est Créer*, Review of *Medium-Photocopy* at Saidye Bronfman Gallery, Le Devoir, Claire Gravel, Montreal, November 28. C11.
Medium Photocopy, review of photocopy exhibition, Jean Tourangeau, Vie des Arts, Montreal
- 1989 *Nude models 'like servants'*, article on *Projected Images*, Wendy Dudley, The Calgary Herald, December 13. C3.
Projected Images, a subtle feminist statement, article on film, Wayne Lovejoy, Calgary Tonite, December 20.12.
- 1990 *High Performance Rodeo '90*, article on performances, Calgary Tonite, Dec. 20.
Die Quantifizierbarkeit des Menschseins, article on Zurich performance/installation, Zurich Kaferberg No. 38, September. 11.
 "Glasgow," *Art Monthly*, article by Roland Miller on Glasgow Girls exhibition and performance. Fall. 5.
- 1991 *Performance au/in Canada, 1970–1990*, Alain-Martin Richard & Clive Roberson, Editions Intervention, Québec; Coach House Press, Toronto. 67,335,349,356,361,363.
- 1995 *Medium Photocopy: Canadian and German Copygraphy*, catalogue of international exhibition, Montreal. 41, 75–77, 92–93
- 1997 *Communities*, catalogue for Full Circle exhibition with Cat Cayuga, Carol Podedworny, Hamilton Artists Inc.
- 2000 *Silver: 25 Years of Artist-Run Culture*, The New Gallery Press, Calgary
Kitchen Living: Installation offers perspective on a "woman's place", Kay Burns, Fast Forward Weekly, February 17. 15.
Mother Knows Best, review of Kitchen Freedom, Mireille Perron, Border Crossings Spring. 73–74.
Kitchen Freedom: Exhibit takes seasoned view on women's roles, Mary-Beth Laviolette, The Calgary Herald, February 26. ES 10.
- 2001 *Dandelion* Vol. 27, No. 2, editor Anne Hallett, cover illustration from *Kitchen Freedom*, Calgary: Department of English, University of Calgary.
Tessera Vol. 29, Winter 2001–2002, digital collage images, Toronto: Coach House Press. 33.
- 2002 *Women with a Past*, Mireille Perron, Artichoke, Fall/Winter. 22–26.
- 2004 *Show shines light on identity*, Janet Naclia, review of *Locus Suspectus*, The Calgary Herald, September 25. ES2.
Statements of Intent, Aidan Dunne, review of *Locus Suspectus* in Belfast, The Irish Times, May 14. 16.
- 2005 *City celebrates the business of art*, Jennifer Partridge, article on Vida's Established Arts award. The Calgary Herald, April 22. D6.
Locus Suspectus: where the hidden comes to light, Kay Burns, Artichoke, Spring, 31–36.
- 2006 *An Alberta Art Chronicle, adventures in recent & contemporary art*, Mary-Beth Laviolette. Canmore: Altitude Publishing. 140,142,216,246,307–09,319.
Artist takes us into history's gardens, Gilbert A. Bouchard, The Edmonton Journal, July 3. B1, B2.
- 2007 *Alberta Art and Artists*, Patricia Ainslie and Mary-Beth Laviolette, Calgary: Fifth House. 89,137

CONTRIBUTORS

Marcella Bienvenue has had a significant and lengthy career in performance, film, and video, as well as filling leadership roles in Calgary's arts community — at Parachute Centre for Cultural Affairs and as Executive Director of the Calgary Society of Independent Filmmakers. Her film *The Heart is a Lonely Monitor* garnered the Alberta Motion Picture Industries Association (AMPIA) innovation award. Her performances have been presented at The Woman's Building in Los Angeles, The Banff Centre, and the Betty Mitchell and Pleiades Theatres in Calgary. Her media installations have been shown at the Nickle Arts Museum and the Glenbow Museum in Calgary. She has contributed art text, art criticism, reviews, interviews, photography, visual material, postcards, design and layout to such publications as *Fuse*, *Parallelogramme Retrospective 76–77*, *Performance: Live Art to the Present*, *Artists of Alberta*, *City Limits*, and *Interface*.

Terry Billings currently lives in Saskatoon where she teaches studio courses at the University of Saskatchewan. Her video, audio and installation work examines the relationship of nature and culture and investigates boundaries between public forms of understanding and subjective experience. She has exhibited her work nationally and in the United States. Her recent writing practice includes curatorial statements and critical writing including "Ahasiw Maskegon Iskewew — Language, Realism, Webs, Domains", for the publication *Writing for Electronic Media* and "Voices in an Intimate Space" for the exhibition *Locus Suspectus ... where the hidden comes to light*.

Rosemary Brown is a long time community activist, and now also a mixed media artist, one of whose interests is the relevance that pre-Celtic imagery has in addressing contemporary issues. A founding member of Women, Creativity and Political Voice, she earned a BFA (with distinction) in drawing from the Alberta College of Art and Design in 2005.

Kay Burns is a prolific Calgary artist working with audio, video, computer/electronics, installation and performance art; she is also a freelance curator and writer. Some of the topics she has investigated include low-frequency sound, displacement/resettlement, memory, and issues of language, silence and communication. Much of her recent work involves the processes of collecting, interpreting and categorizing, as well as collaborations with Calgary's the Ministry of Walking. Past works have included *Dislocation/Relocation: Stories of Displacement* (2003), *(Quad Cam Project) Out of Place: HomeCam* (2001–02), and *Random Access Memory* (2000). Performatively, she has presented lectures as the fictitious researcher/ethnographer Iris Taylor in several international settings.

Michael Murphy is a Calgary-based writer. In addition to his work for numerous arts organizations and corporate clients, he has written for publications including *Artichoke*, *Avenue*, *Saturday Night* and *Western Living*.

Amy Gogarty is a painter and writer who specializes in issues related to contemporary art and craft. She taught visual arts history, ceramics history and contemporary theory for 16 years at the Alberta College of Art & Design in Calgary, Alberta, prior to relocating to Vancouver to devote time to her studio and writing practice. She has exhibited her paintings across Canada and has contributed critical essays and papers to journals and symposia in Canada and abroad. Along with Mireille Perron and Ruth Chambers, she co-edited an anthology of critical essays and artist projects incorporating ceramics entitled *Utopic Impulses: Contemporary Ceramics Practice*, and, with Nisse Gustafson, the third volume of *Craft Perception and Practice*, a series of essays on contemporary craft practice initiated by the late Paula Gustafson. Both are published in 2007 by Ronsdale Press in Vancouver.

Christine Sowiak, as Curator of Art at the Nickle Arts Museum since 1998, has curated a number of group and solo exhibitions for the museum including *Blue* (1998), *John Will... ain't paralyzed yet* (2001), *That Still Place ... That Place Still* (including William MacDonnell, Landon MacKenzie, Eugene Ouchi and David MacMillan, 2003) and *About Time* (2006) as well as creating and curating *Series*, a program that features the work of Calgary artists approaching mid-career. These *Series* shows have included Amy Gogarty, M.N. Hutchinson, Pam King, Sandra Vida, Mireille Perron, Steven Nunoda, Tim Westbury, Shelley Ouellet, Catharine Hamel, Suzanne Franks, Pam King, Linda Carreiro and Barbara Milne. Sowiak's visual arts writing encompasses many essays included in Nickle exhibition catalogues, a chapter for the textbook, *A Passion for Identity: Canadian Studies for the 21st Century*, an essay for the TRUCK (an artist-run centre) *Toxic Beauty* (2001), and the essay *as good a place as any* for the exhibition *Elsewhere* at the Trianon Gallery in Lethbridge. Sowiak is also Adjunct Associate Professor to the Department of Art, University of Calgary, teaching contemporary Canadian art and supervising graduate students in the MFA program.

John Will is an artist living and working in Calgary. His work in the area of painting, printmaking, photography and video has been exhibited locally, regionally and internationally. He is the Minister of Information of Artists Anonymous but does not practice what he preaches.

COLLABORATORS

Cat Cayuga is Onondaga/Mohawk and has been an active cultural/arts worker in the Aboriginal community for over a decade. Her previous work is in interactive "popular theatre", writing, and video. She has been the Assistant Director for the Aboriginal Arts Program at the Banff Centre for the Arts and the Creative Producer for the video project, *Elder Voices: Strengthening Our Cultural Ground*. Her own video works include *A Nation is...* and *Do You Hear Me Scream?* Cat is currently working in the social justice field.

Pauline Cummins has worked through the media of photography, sound, text and video since the early 80s. Her work often contains a sensuality, which she uses to explore questions of Identity and Gender. She grew up in Dublin, but has traveled extensively, working for a year with the Turkana tribe in Northern Kenya in the Seventies and living and working in Toronto, Canada in the 80s. She has exhibited in the US and Canada, Germany, Denmark, Britain and the Netherlands as well as being involved in the Irish art world. She was the founding chairperson of WAAG, the Women Artists Action Group, which helped to promote the work of Irish artists in Ireland and throughout Europe. Cummins now lives and works in Wicklow and is a lecturer in Fine Art Sculpture at the National College of Art and Design, Dublin.

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ESSAY / COMMENTARY CREDITS

Michael Murphy's essay first appeared in Artichoke, Summer 1993. 48–51.

Christine Sowiak's essay first appeared in the publication *Series*, Nickle Arts Museum, January 2000.

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