

REBECCA GARRETT: SEARCH



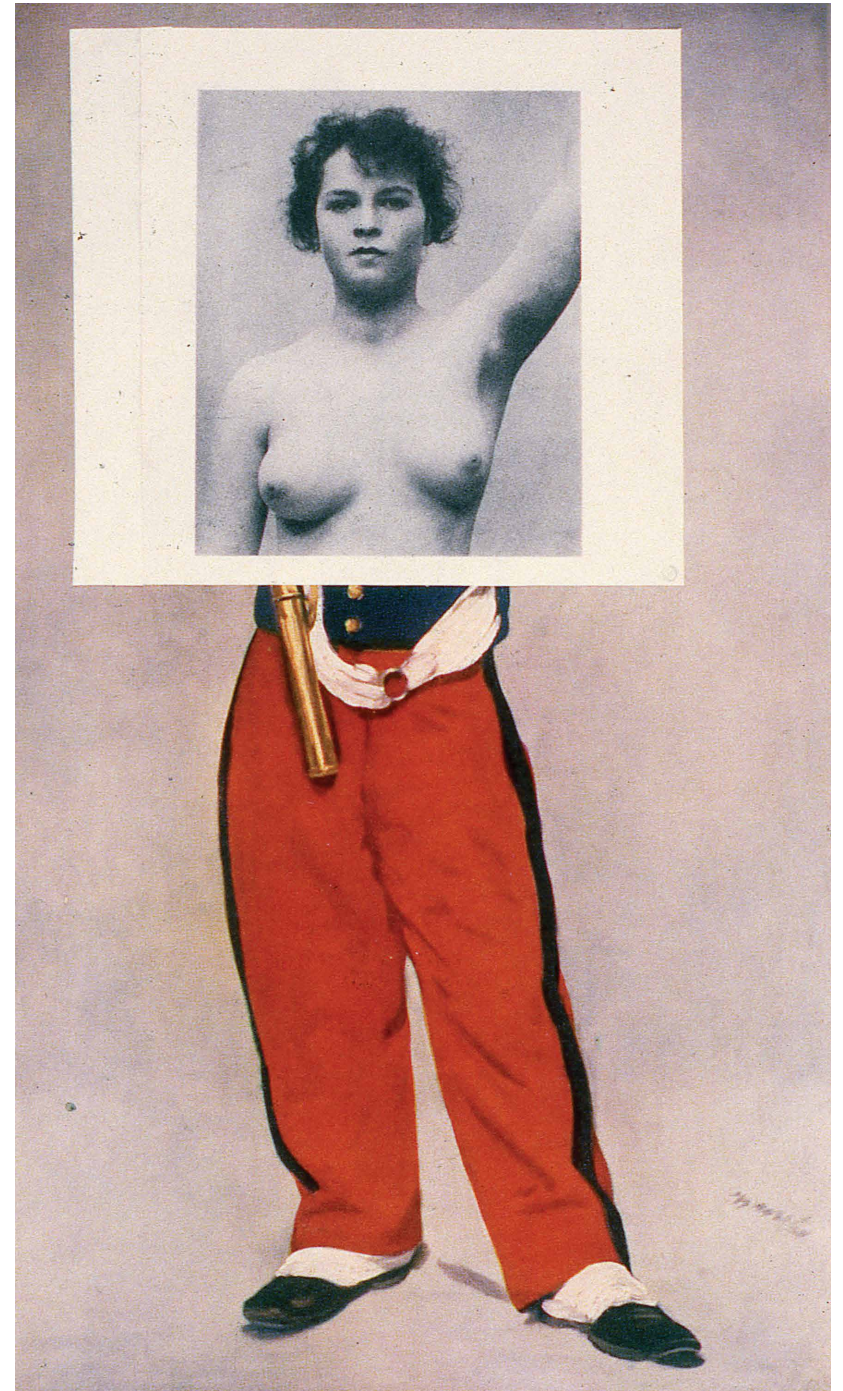
Shortly after I moved back to Canada from Zimbabwe, I had a dream. I was going to visit friends who lived in a village about an hour's drive away from Harare. I hadn't seen them for some time and was looking forward to it very much, but had trouble finding transport. I wound up getting a lift with some Canadian soldiers—young men having a good time in an easy posting. It was a fun drive. We shared stories, laughed and joked and talked about home.

When we arrived at the village where my friends lived they heard the vehicle and came running out of their houses to greet me. I was so excited to see them and started to run toward them, but soon saw one of my friends stumble and fall, and then another. Blood was everywhere. I realized that the soldiers had opened fire and started shooting.

After some time I realized it was time to look more closely at this place called home.

Rebecca Garrett





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INTRODUCTION

MIKE HOOLBOOM

There are some artists who will never have to look back from the end of their days and turn their decisions into question marks. Why did I do all that? Rebecca Garrett is one of their number: equal parts artist and activist, it's as if the two couldn't be separated, as if the urgencies of homelessness or Palestinian sovereignty couldn't be peeled away from breakfast, or a new startling collage juxtaposition. Where are we: the global village?

Being an activist. I think it means not simply being able to see through the mirage of corporate media, to understand how disciplines of power operate in the social body. But also and most centrally: to bear witness to someone else's suffering, to feel these newly vulnerable bodies, these mothers and daughters and uncles as if they were part of your own family. Even if they are being persecuted, tortured, displaced. Especially then.

I want to ask her: how can you bear it? More than occasional answers reside in her four-decades-long makings, a prodigious effort that includes an astonishing number of collectives and collaborations. Her frame is an embrace open to the shifting conditions and requirements of her picture partners, now newly empowered, because she allows them to stand in front of the camera and behind it. These generous media vehicles allow temporary communities to take up residence, whether they are the Dehcho First Nations, some of Toronto's homeless, or a media collective resisting neo-liberal take downs.

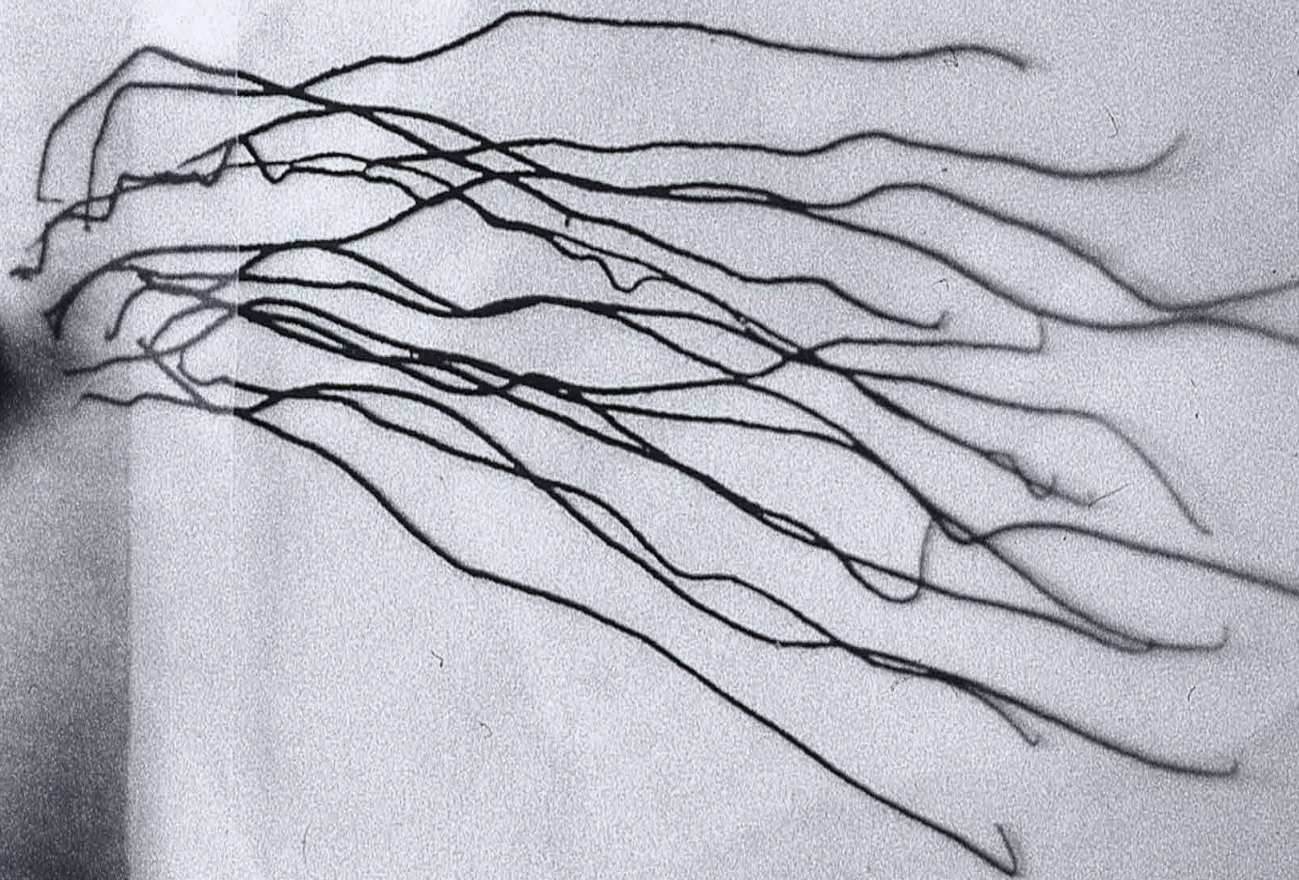
The great Italian feminist historian Sylvia Federici has written often about capitalism's beginnings (and ongoing reinventions) with a wide scale theft of the commons, coupled with a vicious and systematic attack on women. Over and again, Rebecca re-imagines and reoccupies the commons with/in her work, turning public buildings into projection screens and conversations into activist media. The cinema expands with new urgencies: the home of a tyrant mayor becomes a movie theatre, a parking lot becomes an art gallery, a city park becomes a squatted settlement, a hole in the prairie ground becomes a place where new communities might gather to re-imagine post-capital relations.

The voices and faces of women are central throughout, not only the artist's ghost sister, but her many collaborative comrades who have become new sisters, new forms of family doing the collective work of social reproduction. Making art is central to the making of these lives: saucepans are handled alongside cameras, marching for Palestine also means showing up for pals who are fading with depression or Alzheimer's. In the words of Myriam Gurba: *she also made kindness*.

This volume is made possible through the volunteerism and good will of some of the so many she has touched along the way. This book is also a picture of community as folks weigh in not only on Rebecca's many works and actions, but also on systems of power, and an exploration of some of the possibilities that artists might explore to resist.



ART



CINE BLANC

1980, SUPER 8 FILM, 35', COLLABORATION WITH JORGE LOZANO

JORGE LOZANO

Super 8 filmmakers like Scott and Beth B had begun adding content to their work, not just doing abstract experimental stuff. Of course the abstractions also had politics, but they were toxic, chemicals everywhere. We wanted to use the experimental film language to start different conversations. We were not pure at all!

There was a connection between vanguards in art and radical politics—how to change the systems that oppressed us. Many disenchanted artists joined urban guerilla groups. It was very middle class in the name of the working class.

I had been questioning the supremacy of theory over people's behavior especially in Leftist Marxist groups. I found a Red Brigades manual about how to be an urban guerilla fighter but questioned the use of violence and the need for epistemological obedience in order to change the system. I asked Rebecca to collaborate on a super 8 drama essay, a kind of a joke, an ironic take on this. It was shot on ten rolls of sound film. I brought the reel-to-reel tape recorder on location, and played the soundtrack I had made which would be recorded through the camera's microphone. She was the main actor, she corrected the script and we found the abandoned east end warehouses together.

It's called *Cine Blanc* because the radical left was a very middle-class white movement. We had two sayings. The first was about the Cuban Revolution. You give your life for the revolution, but you don't leave your position. The other was: You fight for liberation, but at home you're a fascist. In Colombia I could see how my friends who were leaders remained homophobic, their macho attitudes. I was trying to change my own systems, my situation at home, my father's power. Here it was the same dichotomy.

Rebecca and I were part of an unnamed collective that was queer, several were trans, as a group we were exploring the body and talked openly about sexuality. We didn't feel the need to name our identities. We were part of a generation that was starting to break down the silos of gender and sexual identity definitions. We were an entanglement. As a result there was an intimacy making the film.



PROJECT FOR A DIVIDED HOUSE

1981, SCULPTURE, SUPER 8 AND SOUND INSTALLATION

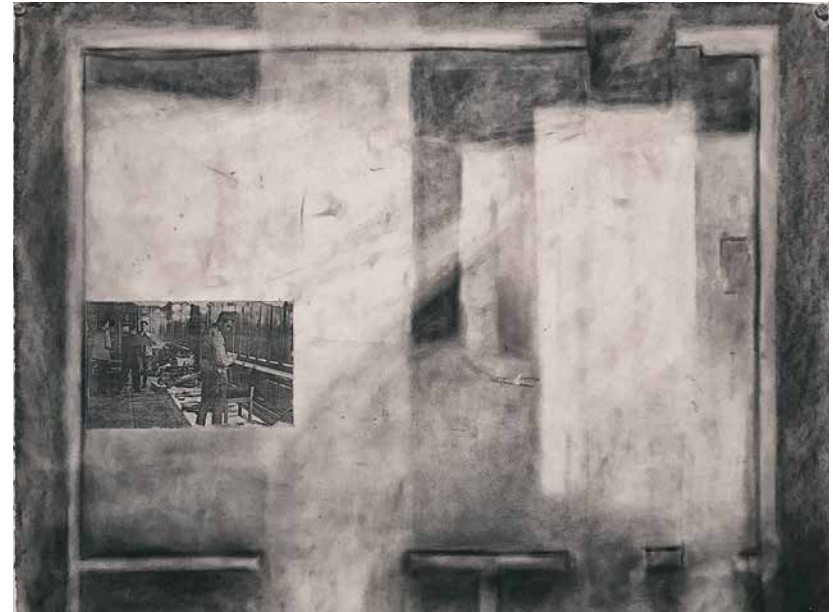
MARTHA FLEMING

Garrett has used the inherent syntax of architecture in the room(s) of a “divided house.” The image of men on the street is projected at ground level; that of a woman in bed sequestered under the eaves. The wall, diaphanous as it is, seems to order the films architecturally, and their placement in turn infuses it with the appearance of function.

The still images are not projected in film loop form merely to arbitrate a symmetry of presentation. The shimmer of their apparent motion puts them ever on the edge of indication and heightens their credibility as still images. At the same time they inform the two moving image loops with the detached and gestureless muteness which the face of the woman epitomizes. Together they point to the fact that film’s semblance of movement is comprised of still images—“unity and diversity.” The lack of resolution inherent in the loops’ repetition places them further in stasis, and their individual isolation in projection onto different sections of the wall strengthens their contingency. They exist phenomenologically and yet are eminently aware of each others’ presence and placement, their territoriality eerily paralleled by the disembodied audio-loops.

The shrill tenor of the two voices, the music’s permanent crescendo, the deliberate and furtive anxiety of the hammering, the intangibility of the filmic images themselves, the tension between the still but moving images and the moving but still images, between the two walls and the ambivalence of the space between them, polarly describe the anxious and definitive conditionality of desire.

Originally published in Vanguard Magazine, 1981.



PUBLIC SCHOOL

1983, MIXED-MEDIA INSTALLATION

ELKE TOWN

In *Public School*, Rebecca Garrett set into opposition two entirely different models for receiving and relaying information about history and representation. One, a linear model, the other a circular model. The linear model depicted the “natural” evolution of man from his hairy primate past to his upright present. Larger-than-life blow-ups of conventional textbook-style drawings lined the four walls of the gallery to show an unmistakable progression. There was no denying the concrete materiality of the drawings, the authority of the history they depicted, or their utter domination of the space. This was formal institutionalized history, confirmed in scientific knowledge.

At the centre of this set-up, and surrounded by the human evolution drawings, stood a 1940s style stand-up microphone. This was the second model. Hidden in the outward shell of the microphone was a small speaker. Heard on this speaker, at intervals punctuated by a couple of minutes of silence, was an audiotrack featuring a segment of a radio show in which a man is engaged in a word association quiz with a young girl. This was followed by Marlene Dietrich’s rendition of the song *Puff the Magic Dragon* in German. Then there was a two-minute silence, until the audio loop repeated itself. This was history as it is conveyed by contemporary communications technology—immediate but illusive, complex and fragmentary. It was suggested in the work that this was also a more subjective history, analogous to how history is experienced by the individual in society.

The viewer stands within the panoramic, authoritative model of evolution, neither questioning its validity nor doubting its claims. This is the unchanged and unchanging history of “man” in which “woman’s” inclusion is assumed, but from which she is notably absent. The microphone, on the other hand, is a mysterious object, a “terra incognita.” The viewer must approach it both to puzzle over its existence within the room and actively listen to catch the voice of the songstress. Garrett states: “I’m interested in how women exist as an absence in representation and want to place the spectator in this absent present and somehow confront it.”

Conditions are presented, no solution is offered, and the viewer is left on the shifting ground of the territory between two realms that remain separate and distinct, but bound together.

Originally published for “Dark/Light” exhibition at Mercer Union Nov-Dec 1986 (Judith Barry, James Coleman, Rebecca Garrett) curated by Elke Town.



CRAZY JANE AND THE TORRENT MEN

1986, VIDEO INSTALLATION

ELKE TOWN

In *Crazy Jane and the Torrent Men*, Garrett continues her concern with issues of inclusion and exclusion, presence and absence. In this work, the spectator steps into a narrow, corridor-like space, flanked on both sides by two large screens, each six feet tall and eight feet wide. Projected full frame on these screens are two alternating and entirely different film images, one of nature in the form of a rapidly flowing river, the other of culture in the form of an active and peopled urban interior. The river flows toward the viewer on one screen and away from the viewer on the other. It is an image of overwhelming seduction and sensuousness, completely incorporating the viewer in its flow. This is followed by the interior footage in which Garrett uses the full ability of film to physically disorient and distance the viewer through editing technique and camera movement. It is impossible to look at both screens at the same time and the images are almost assaultive in their effect. Here again are two models for understanding, one sensual, the other textual. What were two separate entities are now joined in a continuous film loop.

In both *Crazy Jane and the Torrent Men* and her previous work, Garrett places the viewer in the centre of duality, in between self and other, interior and exterior, nature and culture.

Garrett is fully aware that “nature” and “culture” are not only historical and ideological constructs but deeply codified signifiers suggesting many levels of meaning. Her overt and transparent use of them as models acknowledges this and by presenting the possibility of a feminist reading, she problematizes and destabilizes them even further. Any use of nature in contemporary art, for instance, is riddled with problems. In representation and reality, nature has a history that may refer to utopia, to the frontier, to conquest, to exploitation, and to God. For Garrett, the way in which women have been represented in history and art parallels these representations. Like nature, women have been there for the taking, for idealization, conquest and adoration. Yet what constitutes their imaginary and constructed presence in representation is their real absence in history.

The contemplative image of nature, which encourages understanding through the senses, is about exclusion; yet that image is constructed precisely to include the viewer thereby making them complicit. The oppressive, claustrophobic interior, on the other hand, which in its disorienting effect, is intended to suggest the complications of understanding through language (in this case the “language” of film construction), includes a representation of women, but disorients and rejects the viewer in its pervue. Garrett’s purpose is to point to the shortcomings inherent in models based on duality. It is entirely fitting therefore that in light of such restrictive and limiting models Garrett can characterize her own position as one of ambivalence.

This extract was originally published for “Dark/Light” exhibition at Mercer Union Nov-Dec 1986 (Judith Barry, James Coleman, Rebecca Garrett) curated by Elke Town.



A MOMENT OF PURE FEELING

1989, INSTALLATION

JORGE LOZANO

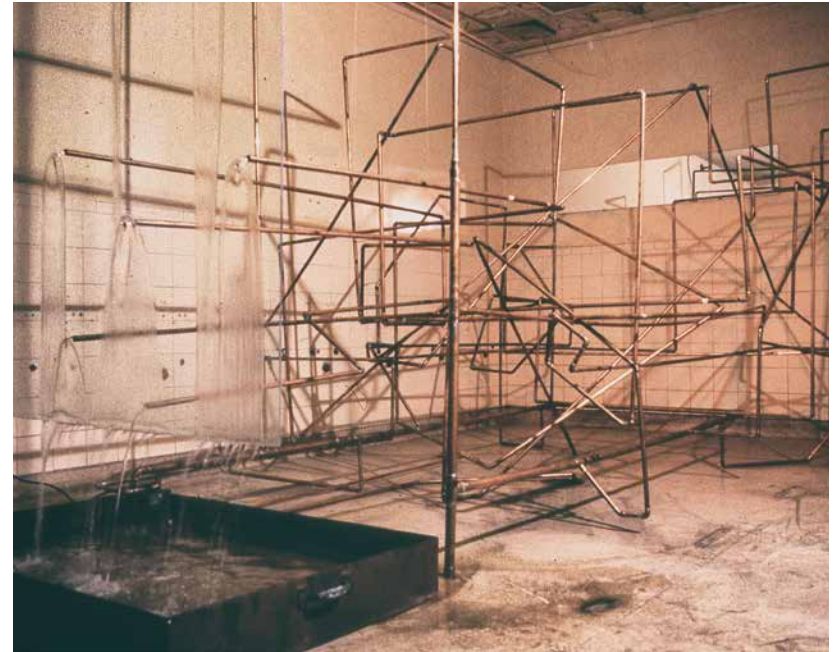
Remembering is a bizarre moment of reverie; it is an undoing through discontinuities to reach the heart of the matter. A past that comes back as a present as if nothing has really changed. But has it?

A hauntological conversation with Rebecca Garrett. Rebecca, we have spoken of the poetics of the real many times, the incorporeal real, and against thinking of art as a measuring device, but more like a headfirst dive into the unknown, the prohibited. However now that time has passed, let's go back to measuring, let's talk about what was behind *A Moment of Pure Feeling* that you presented at the General Electric Plant at Dupont and Lansdowne, a toxic place, home for the manufacturing of electrical devices and polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB)—a combination of 209 specific chemicals. A male industrial space par excellence.

RG: Yes the factory was extremely toxic. It was an environmental catastrophe, rendered vacant by toxins. *A Moment* is composed of two parts: *Men who Dream* (16mm loop projection) and *Marcel Loves to Dance*. In *Men Who Dream* I made a connection between the production of industrial appliances and the production of cinema, both male dominated. I had been working in a factory where my boss was fixated on me and would go into a reverie while I did all the work. He would close his eyes, transported into a transcendental space, without knowing it. This is the way that cinema works when generating mythological images of women, promising a moment of pure feeling. A high.

Marcel Loves to Dance: copper, water, reservoir, fountain pump and large sheet of glass installed in the men's washroom, referencing Duchamp's *The Large Glass*. I was turning the canon upside down, seeing what was underneath. Both pieces are about desire and its channelling, as constructed from a male point of view.

Si Rebecca, I remember being there, as if I was in the temple of industrial chemical men, soon to become digital finance men. Very toxic indeed! The endless repetition... the perpetual motion of the desire machine.



SECRETS

1990, INSTALLATION

REBECCA GARRETT

I was living in Zimbabwe at a time when apartheid still gripped South Africa. Zimbabwe's borders were closed, so it was a very insular society. It was a liberated country, they'd been independent for a decade but trade was limited. There was one brand of toothbrush or toilet paper, that was great. The capital city of Harare was built for a small white elite with sprawling suburbs/townships around it. There were many remnants of colonialism, the courthouse in downtown Toronto looks the same as the one in downtown Harare, the government buildings were all modeled in the same colonial era.

As a white North American living in a liberated African country I was aware of the huge amount of information I didn't have access to, though I could sense what wasn't being said, that there were power dynamics at work. All of that exists in Canada as well, but I didn't see them so clearly when I was here. It was a time of learning to understand the blindness of privilege and the arrogance of ignorance.

I was artist-in-residence at the National Gallery of Zimbabwe when the idea of *Secrets* came up. I'd done an earlier work using a gallery room as a zoetrope, a circular narrative of images. I did a similar thing with the word "secrets": each letter had a pair of images beside it in black and white. One picture would show a place and the other would present a gesture made in that place.

For instance the letter C had an image of a tower, the townships in Zimbabwe had huge light towers that illuminated areas at night. But this tower was shot in the daytime, it's just an empty tower. Beside it there was an image of a woman putting an American dollar bill in her pocket.



SOUL CONTAINERS

1991, MULTI-MEDIA INSTALLATION

REBECCA GARRETT

Soul Containers was my first exhibition in Zimbabwe. It asked the question: what can we know about a place when we're not from there? It was rare to be somewhere like that without an official reason then, and those reasons created strong frames. I felt fortunate to be able to go and just look around. The person I was with was offered a job and moved there. I went to see what it was like but didn't expect to stay. I didn't expect to love it so much.

Soul Containers was an installation in two rooms at Gallery Delta in Harare. On the floor was a huge prop of a fake book, with open pages showing graphs from the World Bank that were used to quantify and control local populations in Zimbabwe. On the walls were a series of photographs, paintings and mixed-media works that celebrated individual experience in Harare.

The massive book object cast a shadow, and inside that darkness there were a pair of light boxes showing women cooking in the market. They are literally in the shadow of this information, the frames we bring with us.

I used silhouettes and shadows almost all the time, I just couldn't deal with representing people. As a white person, if I represented a black person it meant so many things besides what you're wanting to do, and if I represented a white person standing in Zimbabwe... I realized how the history of landscape painting in Zimbabwe, which is not so dissimilar to the history of landscape painting in Canada, was viewed as a deed. Those paintings were a way of declaring ownership of that land by white people.

I hadn't worked through that in my own country. When I came back to Canada I recognized my own colonial past. My ancestors were settlers from England, Ireland and Scotland. The history of the relationship with Indigenous peoples and the violent use, abuse and theft of land had been systematically erased. It was a shock when I began to learn the truth. Even the traditions of my own practice, rooted in European aesthetics and values, looked completely different, and I've never gotten over that.



STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENTS

1992, MIXED-MEDIA INSTALLATION

REBECCA GARRETT

After I'd been in Zimbabwe for a couple of years, I thought there should be a UN resolution saying: people shouldn't be allowed to take photographs of a place until they've been there more than six months.

"Structural Adjustments" refers to a set of economic policies that are a pre-condition for getting a loan from the International Monetary Fund. It usually involves a combination of free-market policies such as privatisation, fiscal austerity, free trade and deregulation. It happened in Canada first, but wasn't framed the same way. Conditions grew more extreme in Zimbabwe because there were so few social programs to begin with. It meant that women were left to look after everyone, because there was no one else.

I went to see *Thelma and Louise* when it came out in Zimbabwe, it looked really different there. It was very starkly about "the law" and what happens to women who push against the law.

Structural Adjustments was done during my time as Artist-in-Residence at the National Gallery of Zimbabwe (1989-1994).

Aid agencies provided grey wool blankets that became the ground of the work. I was making my own clothes then, and cut out the shape of a woman's dress pattern using fabric from Zimbabwe, a Java print. I drew silhouettes of people lying on top of this woman (seeking comfort and support), and wrote a text representing her thoughts on the top and bottom. Authorities kept saying that everyone had to tighten their belts, so I bought a heavy leather built to bind the textile. Even as women tighten their belts, the same is not expected of the technocrats who are letting theirs out.



RETURNING TAKES TIME

1991, VIDEO, 18:56'

ANNIE HOLMES

One of our shooting days for this piece involved driving out of Harare to Lake Chivero, to film the green weed clogging up the water along the shore. Closer, you see the sun-charred leaves and hear the churning waves. In the final piece, this footage follows clips from the testimony of Dirk Coetzee describing how long it took his covert unit of apartheid security police to burn a body after political assassinations. As viewers our stomachs and hearts lurch along with the seething weed.

Rebecca Garrett changed my life in many ways and this was one of them. In 1991 when she involved me in this production, I knew only a rational logical verbal narrative approach to political documentary filmmaking. Why were we filming lake weed? Or the buying of tomatoes at a roadside market in the suburbs?

I knew only prose. Rebecca taught me poetry. She knew and knows how to create space for the viewer's thoughts to swell.

To watch *returning takes time* nearly 30 years later is heartbreaking in old and new ways. Zimbabwean shops in Harare were full then. We lived on "the frontline" before the end of apartheid. Rebecca's tape reminds us of the price of our freedoms, however tarnished. As k.d. lang sings on the soundtrack, "tears don't care who cries them."



AN ORDERED ABSENCE

1992, MIXED-MEDIA INSTALLATION

DOT TUER

The images we see here are the ephemeral traces of a site-specific work made in another continent and another century of subtle alterations to a crumbling colonial edifice in Harare, Zimbabwe: of a silhouette figure made of felt lying on a worn wooden floor and another made of plaster embossed in the wall; of stones painted with photo-emulsions of rural landscapes and a pair of watchful eyes lodged in the crevices of brick interiors. As memory talismans, these images belong to a moment in time when dreams of liberation and freedom struggles shaped the past and future of Africa, when singing and dancing in the streets and in fields was a defiant act of joy wielded against a defeated imperialism, when Mandela, speaking at the World Economic Forum in Davos in 1992, envisioned the dawn of a new age of peace and human dignity and cautioned against an impending human-made ecological catastrophe and mass starvation.

Now, as the cruel logic of neoliberal markets and the greed of a global extractivist economy ravage the earth, and migrants fleeing wars and hunger perish in ever greater numbers, these images become portents of a disorder not yet conceivable when they were made. Perhaps, then, there never was an ordered absence to be found in the crumbling colonial edifice in Harare, but rather an unruly haunting. Perhaps the silhouette figures and watchful eyes were always, and still are, a cipher of a prescient presence: an exorcist's elixir of resistance to imperialist design. They warn us, as does Mandela, of the disorder wrought by empire, of the persistence of settler colonialism; they embody the desire for human dignity and freedom. At once talismans and portents, they guard against the impending darkness and serve as the protectors of future dreams of liberation.



CONTINENTAL DRIFT

1994, VIDEO, 52:18'

RIAZ MEHMOOD

“In this country it is just impossible to survive without knowing your neighbour.” *Continental Drift*

Ten minutes into Rebecca Garrett’s video I soon forgot that this tape was made exactly a quarter century ago. The issues explored in this work are critically urgent, and continue to be relevant in the face of the current growing global trends towards isolationism and distrust of “others.”

Based on the very simple act of asking random people from similar settings to imagine how others live, Rebecca explores the complex issues of otherness, wealth distribution, the power of soft culture, colonial baggage, and immigration. This project, based on the artist’s experience of living and traveling between Zimbabwe and Canada, records the personal views from people in both countries. As a person who has similarly moved between two separate geographical locations, I can relate to the anxieties, over-simplifications and misconceptions of “alien culture” and the images and prejudices it evokes in peoples minds.

In this age of distracted hyper-connectedness, information overload and digital tribalism, it is refreshing to see a work that asks us to pause, reflect and confront our prejudices about “others.” Rebecca invites us to put ourselves in other people’s shoes through the simple act of imagination—a powerful tool for reassessing our own biases and creating other possibilities, and other worlds. For me, the strength of Rebecca’s work is her generosity and ability to weave complex and layered work by connecting local stories and issues with larger social, cultural and political narratives.



MAHOSO: THE CHILD IN A TIME OF INSECURITY

1998, VIDEO, 9:10'

LISA STEELE

“Culture in this country is decided by those people who determine whether this house should be oblong or square or round, those people who determine whether the stairs should be circling or they should be straight up, those people who determine whether or not at this moment in the history of Zimbabwe that we need 50 new highrise buildings in Harare, even though there are millions of homeless people, even on the streets of Harare itself.”

So speaks cultural historian and poet Tafataona Mahoso, against the grain, playfully resisting the frames that would contain or limit his meaning. It is a voice that delights in mixing theory and poetry, history and metaphor. A voice that is inherently political in its insistence on the social dynamics of culture and ideas, but delights in the contradictions of its own position. Mahoso's is a voice that emerges tangled in the time and the place in which he lives, thoroughly engaged in the struggles of his people for dignity, vision, bread and poetry. A voice that questions even as it declares. The issue is culture and representation: the experience is dense, evocative, a blending of text and image, tradition and the new, the known and unknowable, point and counterpoint, in rhythms of silence and speaking.



FOODLAND

1997, VIDEO, 5:30'

LANCELOT THE BRAVE

Displacement #1—How to Manufacture a Myth

A dark sorceress walks in slow motion across a landscape engulfed in flames, each step so gracefully deliberate one can only conclude that she is unafraid of this Inferno because she created it. The haunting minor chordal harmonies of the Wagner Overture tells you as much.

Displacement #2—How to Be a Good Colonialist

In the most jarring way possible, a smash cut introduces the Good Colonialist. We soon realize that the Promethean Princess that had brought fire to earth, is in fact, a colonized labourer—the black African woman “saved” by a white African man. The ingenuity of the white man coupled by the cheap labour of the subservient black woman is a win-win formula that has worked for generations. Small scale farming will be wiped out and only the Corporation will survive. It’s a Universal Law. The white man declares. This is Foodland and we know who owns it.

Displacement #3—How to Be Banal and Evil At the Same Time

The philosopher Hanna Arendt asks “Can one do evil without being evil?” referring to the Nazi butcher Adolph Eichmann who was “neither perverted nor sadistic” but “terrifyingly normal.” In the last shot, the camera zooms into an extreme close up of the white man’s cap. It is labeled “Foodland Ontario,” a Canadian consumer promotion program of the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. The Ministry partners with producers to promote the consumption of Ontario agricultural products. It turns out that our protagonist was educated in the more egalitarian Canadian farming practices and has returned to Africa to bring the Promethean fire and knowledge to its people. Will the real Prometheus please stand up? You’ve been tricked!

When a well-oiled, colonial capitalist hegemony perpetuates and enforces notions that hierarchy is the common good and that silence, obedience and status quo are virtues, then you have Foodland. Hear no evil, see no evil, feel no evil. Welcome to Foodland. At the local grocery store nearest you.



LISTEN

2000, VIDEO INSTALLATION

NELL TENHAAF

Twenty years ago when Rebecca made this video installation we weren't yet familiar with our surrogate selves who now incessantly propagate in digital space, enveloping us in doubts about truth and trust. But news media of the time could get a thoughtful artist to presciently think about those. *Listen* lobs questions about the real/not-real back and forth across two projection screens over a few short minutes. Rebecca deliberately mirrors Florence, which seems straightforward in itself except that so little or so much is going on—the viewer is not sure which. What results is a multiplicity of doublings and stand-ins: Rebecca becomes the face of Florence's media moment; Florence becomes the face of Rebecca's reality in situ, in the moment of filming. Rebecca's gesture is real and Florence's is posed, or vice-versa. It goes on.

The play of surrogacy in *Listen* uses a crossover of the senses, in particular a viewing/listening dynamic. Visually, there's an eerie sense of absence because Florence is filmed while not being addressed, ostensibly off camera but caught by it, inadvertently subject to it. She is listening to Rebecca in conversation with the translator. Across from Florence in the second projection Rebecca closely "listens to" this moment of not-being-there. Doing so puts her completely there—and this reflects back onto the image of Florence to create a doubled effect, calling attention to her absence and simultaneously putting her also fully into the action. Mirroring as listening, multiplied surrogacy and reflection—these make *Listen* a beautifully layered and complex work.

Note: In 1990 Kim Sawchuk and I collaborated on an installation for the Saw Gallery exhibition *Touch That Dial*, curated by Kristof Migone. We titled it *There's a Mirror/Ear at the End of My Bed*. It was about technological invasion of private space via the telephone answering machine.



SCRATCHING THE SURFACE

2000, TWO-MONITOR MOBILE VIDEO INSTALLATION

REBECCA GARRETT

The Tasty Collective had planned an exhibition in a parking lot. Artists arrived in vehicles, paid for our spaces, and set up. The invite was a parking ticket. I was in the midst of a body of work that was about the difficulty of returning. I'd lived most of my life in Canada before moving to Africa for five years where I went through a lot of changes in my thinking and practice. When I came back to Canada it was difficult reintegrating.

I was preoccupied with the indexical nature of the video image, which can be so banal. If you leave home and arrive somewhere else for the first time you watch a surface going by. You don't have any access to it. I felt I was doing that when I got back to Toronto. It's probably something I desired before I left, when I was in my twenties, to find a place from outside to see more clearly, or just to see differently.

For *Scratching the Surface* I filmed drives to and from the airport and put them on two monitors in the back of my 1989 Honda Civic hatchback. I decided I needed something else that was more personal, so I did a performance where I tried to dig through the pavement down to the earth with my bare hands. It took hours and my hands were bleeding. When I found the earth the performance was over.

It was an almost ritual about trying to get through to where I really am. You can't just accept what's there. I'm trying to get through appearance, and realize it's work. To get through is a lot of work.



DOUBLE BEWITCHED

2001, VIDEO, 5:30'

JOHN GREYSON

While you read this, please play Ella's cover of B B & B, which is perhaps what Rebs samples in *DB*, near the end. She's not sure. It's faint, on a scratchy car radio in Kenya. She's in love. It's neither as sanguine as Linda's, nor as earnest as Rita's. Instead, Ella offers up the lyrics as a languid lasso. The wry melancholy of rain on dusty sidewalks.

There's a photo of you in *Double Bewitched* (but only described, never shown). You're staring past the camera, an adult man, bothered and bewildered. Rebs doesn't know you, she saw your photo, heard your story, from the friend who took your photo, when you were in prison. Your story of surviving the Rwandan massacre. You were offered a Solomon's choice. Kill your own family with your own hands, and you live. Refuse and you die. Rebs reports: you made a choice. And then her breath intakes, and can't say more.

Toronto, 1999: *DB* was staged as a conversation between two monitors, side by side. Fragments, scraps, unsure bits. Shot in Toronto, in Kenya, at Rebs' stone house, out car windows, pondering here and there. Hard to tell which is which. Her point. Can you tell? Rebs in leather, on an overpass, hither and yon. Reflections obscure views. Beguiled again.

And now it's two decades later. Perhaps you're still alive. Historians have sourced twenty-two versions of the Solomon story that predate the Bible, and twenty-two versions of BBB that predate Ella. Dusty covers.



DOUBLE BEWITCHED

2001, VIDEO, 5:30'

REBECCA GARRETT

voice-over excerpt

My mother always said: “If you don’t know where you come from from, you’re unlikely to know where you’re going.”

Before I left, I still believed everything could be told...

I’m haunted by the memory of a photograph that a friend of mine took in Rwanda. It is a simple portrait of a man in repose, staring off at something we can’t see. On first glance it looks very poetic, almost romantic. My friend told me that he’d met this man in a prison. When the soldiers came during the genocide, the man was given a choice: if he killed his family—his wife, children, mother and niece—right there and then, he would be allowed to live. If he refused to kill his family, then they would kill him...

I would like to keep a distanced view, to keep things in their place, to be able to form opinions about them...

Even now I can’t seem to get far enough away to get a good look, to get a grip... and let’s face it, this is my true desire... I don’t want to keep shooting properly, maintaining my critical distance. When all of this breaks down, so much is revealed...

That feeling, that sensation again, of something on the edge of my (your) vision; on the tip of my (your) tongue.

We were driving along the highway. We made a game of shooting the guys hanging off the back of the matatus. After we listened to the radio and talked comfortably, relaxed, like two people who know each other’s silences well. I guess I must have left the camera on.



ROOSTER ROCK

2002, VIDEO, 32'

ALI KAZIMI

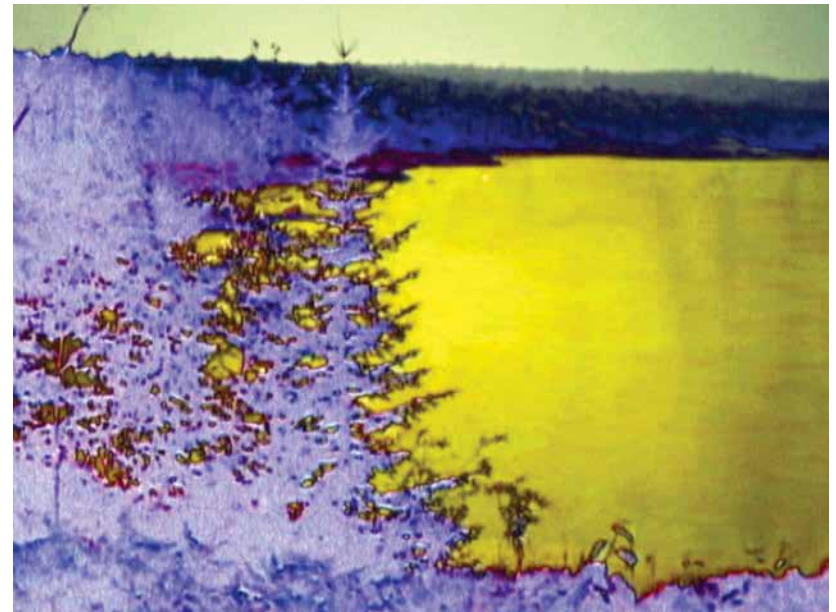
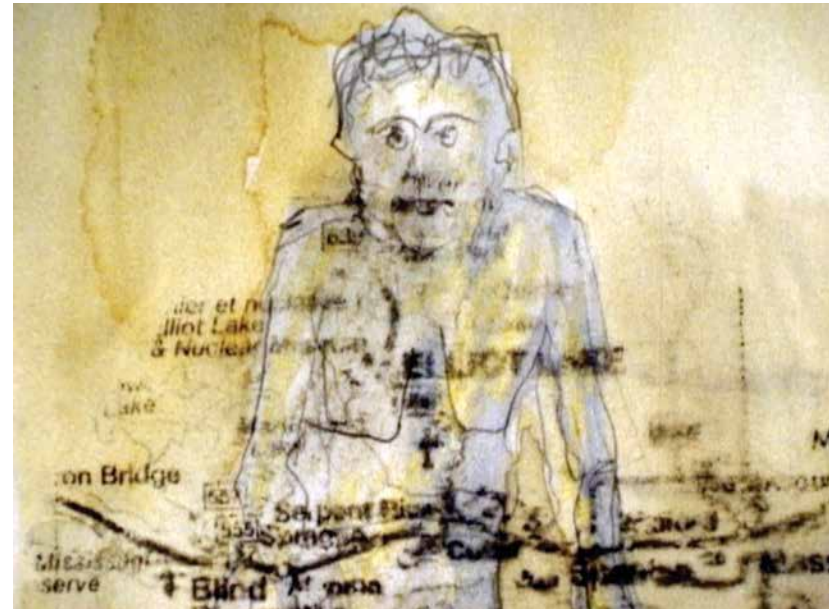
Rebecca collaborated with Indigenous artist Bonnie Devine to create this film inspired by the vision quest experiences of Devine's uncle Art Meawasige. "Rooster Rock" is on the one hand a film told from an Anishnaabe/Ojibwe perspective based on stories and paintings by Devine, on the other hand it is also a wonderful example of a white filmmaker allying with Indigenous artists and elders to bring this Indigenous history to the screen.

Rooster Rock chronicles the dark side of Canada's entry into the nuclear age by bringing to light the little known story of the radiation and industrial fallout as a result of uranium mining in the Serpent River basin from the 1950s onwards and the impact on the Serpent River community.

Using original songs written and hauntingly performed in the Ojibwe language (*Anishinaabemowin*) by Edna Manitowabi, a well-known traditional teacher, ceremonialist, drum keeper and grandmother, and voice-overs by Meawasige, Devine, and her young niece Martha Feltham, altogether provide a history of Serepent River across the generations to the toxic present.

I love the way the film is paced; we are given time to reflect upon the words, Devine's painting are augmented by a rich soundscape. This finely crafted gem is embedded in a sharp, social and political commentary from an Ojibwe perspective,

Rooster Rock is an essential film. It forces the viewer to recognize that colonialism cannot be thought about in the past tense, even in 21st century Canada. It is a vital piece in that lays bare the ongoing colonial continuum in Canada.



LONG MOTEL NIGHT

2008, VIDEO, 2:46'

CLINT ENNS

If county and western music were to be interpreted by a politically engaged Canadian video artist, the result would be similar to *Long Motel Night* (2008). The freedom that is often associated with the open road feels different while traversing the landscape of Northern Canada in the dead of winter. The loneliness and isolation that often accompanies a night spent alone in a motel room located near a truck stop is amplified when the long haul trucks are replaced by pickup trucks and skidoos. In *Long Motel Night*, time-lapsed images shot from a motel room window showing a small town gas station/grocery store are juxtaposed with text that lies somewhere between poetry and the sorrowful lyrics of heartbreak found in country music. In the background we hear a television or radio, broken up in rhythm to the time-lapsed video, signalling an equally restless night of channel surfing.

I drift like a ghost
through what was once my life

Living in the space between two worlds, a small town in the middle of the Dehcho Region in the Northwest Territories.

listen to what you don't know
to the sound you can hear
only in your sleep

Embracing the unknown or the unfamiliar, allowing for perspectives that are different or beyond our current subjectivity. This is a space inhabited by empathy and personal growth. The video ends with a point-of-view shot of the artist walking through the middle of a snow-covered field in the middle of night. A simple question is posed.

"So, what's out there then?"

And, perhaps more importantly: are we ready to listen?



SEARCH>GEOGRAPHY>ERASURE>AFFECT

2011, VIDEO, 55:10'

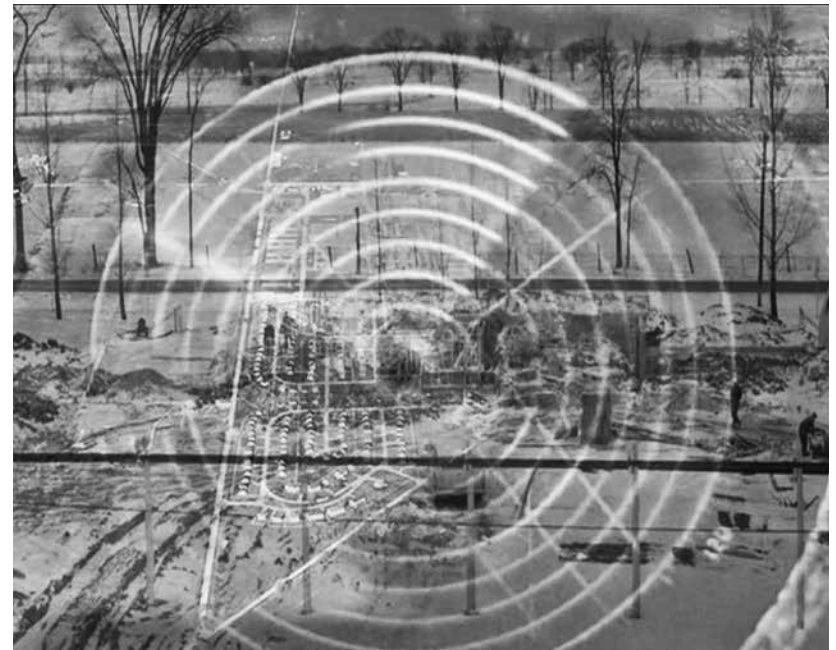
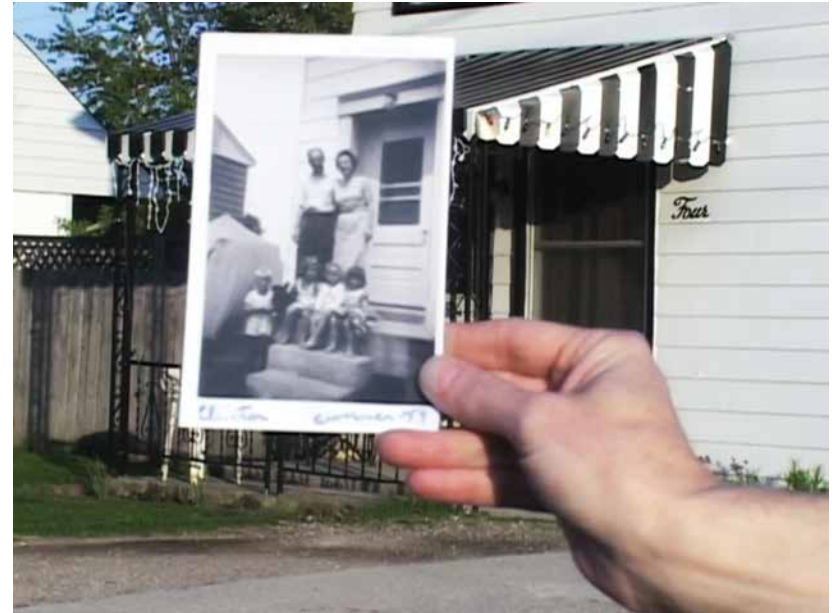
MIKE HOOLBOOM

In her bracing, hour-long video essay about the land of Southwestern Ontario—birthplace, memory site, frontline of personal colonizations—the artist overlays text across the fields and flowers and small towns. This is a landscape that speaks. This untraditional doc nods in two directions—the personal and political, the autobiographical and social. Like so many voyages, it is begun because “something is wrong,” in Garrett’s case, the suicide of her sister, and in a larger sense, the ongoing after effects of a persistent military presence.

Military bases dot the landscape, inspired perhaps by the British military presence during the Second World War, they alighted on southern Ontario as a perfect “model battleground” and radar training centre. The uniform military housing and surveillance technology developments (radar, early warning systems, aircraft detection systems) ensure that defense and control mechanisms are in place to secure the land, remapping it as territory and frontier, as a space of human living that needs to be invaded, colonized, defended and secured.

The war machine that inhabits the land underlay the conquest of Indigenous lands, as well as the “mysterious disappearances” of individuals. This meditation on history and what is officially remembered, on the forgotten traces of empire, is enlivened by the camera’s inquisitive roaming over abandoned buildings, small towns, bracing photographs. A suite of mostly offscreen voices offer us the geological history, Indigenous perspectives, courtroom archives, and military announcements.

It also traces a shift from a geo-politics of space to a chrono-politics of time, following Virilio, an autonomous technology takes the place of democratic participation. The war machine lights battlefields and enemy forces, creating new technologies of seeing that are an integral part of cinema (the handheld video recorder, the 16mm camera), prompting Virilio to write: “War is cinema, and cinema is war.”



SEARCH>GEOGRAPHY>ERASURE>AFFECT

2011, 55:10'

FLORA CAMPOS GARRETT

Subjectivity is determined by structures: language, family, culture, environment, politics, and other social forces. *search>geography>erasure>affect* deconstructs and reconstructs the human subject as constituted by pre-given structures. The stakes here couldn't be higher—nothing less than Meaning itself, how it is derived and disseminated. *search* unravels the intertwined threads that shape people and environments. This faux documentary keeps disintegrating as it makes itself.

How can we make sense of complex phenomena, multiple paths, elliptical editing, shifts of syntax? Superimpositions of virtual nature over abandoned military buildings, juxtapositions of pristine landscape, radar instruments and satellite and surveillance systems...

There is a dissonance of seeing and knowing in recurring arrangements of polarities—glacial movements under the mapping and parceling of land... degraded footage from a trial implicating cover-ups after a menacing backhoe ravaging native land.

There is a disconnect, a lack of registration, between the sophistication of our trained eyes and the knowing of our bodies.

Then there are colloquial stories of burdock leaves, murders, secret conspiracies, ghosts and zombies beside first-person accounts of identity erasure, imperialist assimilation and land grabs. Floating images of missing or murdered Indigenous women, a childhood picture of the artist's sister who committed suicide, whispered warnings that all is not right here.

Recurring and parallel tropes are strategies to recognize these debilitating infrastructures. Can we break free from the structural to the existential, where human beings consciously shape themselves and their environment? Peter Wollen writes "the text, by introducing its own decoding procedures, interrogates itself, so the reader too must interrogate herself, puncture the bubble of her consciousness and introduce into it the rifts, contradictions and questions which are the problematic of the text."

At the end we hear a song—a prayer and rally cry to be free of the Monster—as black and white vegetation turns slowly green.



THAT WAS THEN

2013, VIDEO, 2:10'

MIKE HOOLBOOM

Sometimes after I see a movie, I find myself mysteriously attached to its maker, particularly in the fringe, where actor portals are rare. After Chris Marker died I felt I had lost a piece of myself that only “he” or “his movies” had seen. Rebecca Garrett, on the other hand, heard a call to work. After she got the news the artist began a fierce remembrance named *That Was Then*, a single-channel, mini-essay vid that mixmasters cooking scenes with a moment from the maestro’s past.

Let us remember him in the kitchen first of all. A slurry of nuts are shaken as we hear the sound of bombs away. Hazy lips intrude to assure us: “That was then.” The images suggest: food as a site of war, the question of food sovereignty, which is also the question of land. How to make a picture of the food grown here on the stolen lands of Ontario? The next image offers a clue, showing us three military toys in a melting pot (the phrase sometimes used to describe Canada’s multi-racial society). Saying yes to GI Joe is the cost of eating and citizenship. “Death doesn’t stop anywhere anymore. It’s gotten into everything. It’s not over there. Everything is everywhere.” The militarized/colonial system has already gone global, rapaciously spread across even kitchens like this one. It is the ground of our interactions, part of the landscape.

Clips from Alain Resnais, Ghislain Cloquet and Chris Marker’s *Les Statues Meurent Aussi* (Statues Also Die) (1953) flicker into view intermittently. It is an essay film about African art, and how it might be seen. Can it be made visible outside colonial frames? A way of seeing is also a war of seeing. “An object dies when the living glance trained upon it disappears.”



FIRE IN THE HOLE

2017, VIDEO PERFORMANCE

LINDA DUVALL

Rebecca Garrett answered the call. In 2017, I posted an invitation for people to spend up to two days in a hole on Treaty 6 land in rural Saskatchewan. Rebecca came. She brought with her a memory of her own rural background in Southwestern Ontario, a focus on involving community and lots of curious equipment. She also understood that a hole in the ground exists within a very precise context, with a specific kind of soil that supports certain vegetation and wildlife, which in turn creates a particular ecosystem.

Rebecca initially focused on the connection between the land and the people living in the area. She worked with a local person to host an event based on the consumption of local produce. Her request to each of my neighbours was: bring something that you grow or harvest on your own land. Some were evidently from gardens or chicken coops. Most had no idea that one could harvest and process one's own wheat for the dinner table.

Once everyone had shared and served each of their dishes, Rebecca used the walls of the hole as a surface to screen videos that she had filmed and gathered in response to the site and its various life forms. In viewing these videos, some kind of magical doubling happened. Images of wild animals and fire emerged from the rough sandy surface of the walls of the hole. In another context, these animals would seem remote, out of place. But the projection of the bobcat echoed the comment earlier in the evening about the bobcat crossing the road nearby. Duvall's land is near the South Saskatchewan River that acts as a highway for large and small animals in the same way that it was the route for Indigenous travellers heading to Wanuskewin for the winter in earlier years.

Even more than the animals, the fire on the walls became an evocation of history, survival and shared stories. Seeing fire on a wall while huddling in a hole in rural Saskatchewan is a sensation that sears into one's tendons, creating an indelible memory, maybe one that may awaken some forgotten past, but that feels right and comfortable and archetypal all at once.



SEARCH>SITE>SCAN>THREE SISTERS

2018, PERFORMANCE WITH VIDEO PROJECTION

ALEXANDRA GELIS

From an unfinished conversation with Rebecca.

I know that you used to do performance in the 1980s, sometimes duration-al. Duration stresses “real-time,” it returns us to the present moment-after-moment of the body within ongoing actions. With *search>site>scan>-three sisters* you return to performance and although it is not durational, it has a durational segment. The BODY is back, this time the body of the accident, the body that has healed, the body as geography, the edible body, the laughing body and the learning body. Your body appears as a site of construction and transformation.

I didn't want to be defined by my cancer, just like I've never wanted to be defined by my body or my gender.

This performance deals with issues of representation and technologies like medical imaging, and how the military has oriented their research and how this affects the body. Your own body!

There are multiple implications in the performance; how these phar-maco-military technologies become our enemy. The remedy becomes the poison, which from a feminist point of view leads us to question science, even research itself, not only who controls it but its directions and methodology, and the fact that it is created through a military apparatus with the initial intention to become a weapon and do harm.

Eating has become toxic and dangerous, but in this performance your cooking invites us to eat even as you teach us about the recipe.

Yes, a new body that comes back as a chocolate breast that you invite us to eat.

By cooking in the performance you create a sensorial space that involves the audience with the sensual smell of warm chocolate. This combination of chocolate with maize, squash and beans brings out the healing power of

the three sisters, physically, spiritually and conceptually. Our sense of smell becomes activated, and it entangles us with your experience. In the end, we are left with the pleasant feeling that resistance is possible.



SEARCH>SITE>SCAN>THREE SISTERS

2018, VIDEO, 10'

EMILY VEY DUKE

E: What are you doing today? Do you want to hang out?

R: I can't. I'm shopping for new boobs.

E: What? Why? What's wrong with your old boobs?

R: They're gone!

E: What do you mean they're gone? Where did they go?

R: Actually I'm not sure. I think they were immolated.

E: Like self-immolated?

R: No, no, um—other-immolated, I guess.

E: Oh my god! Did you report it? To the authorities?

R: No, it was the... well, it was the authorities who took them. And then sent them for immolation.

E: (blanches) R, I'm so sorry. Is there anything I can do? Do you want me to start a GoFundMe or something?

R: No. They took them for my own good.



SCARBORO LARGO

2018, VIDEO, 13:20'

LANCELOT THE BRAVE

Eadweard Muybridge used his zoopraxiscope to record a naked “Man in Motion” in his Animal Locomotion series, to study the “normal/abnormal” mechanics of the male anatomy in spatial movement. Before X-rays, doctors saw locomotion studies as useful in diagnosing diseases and their effects.

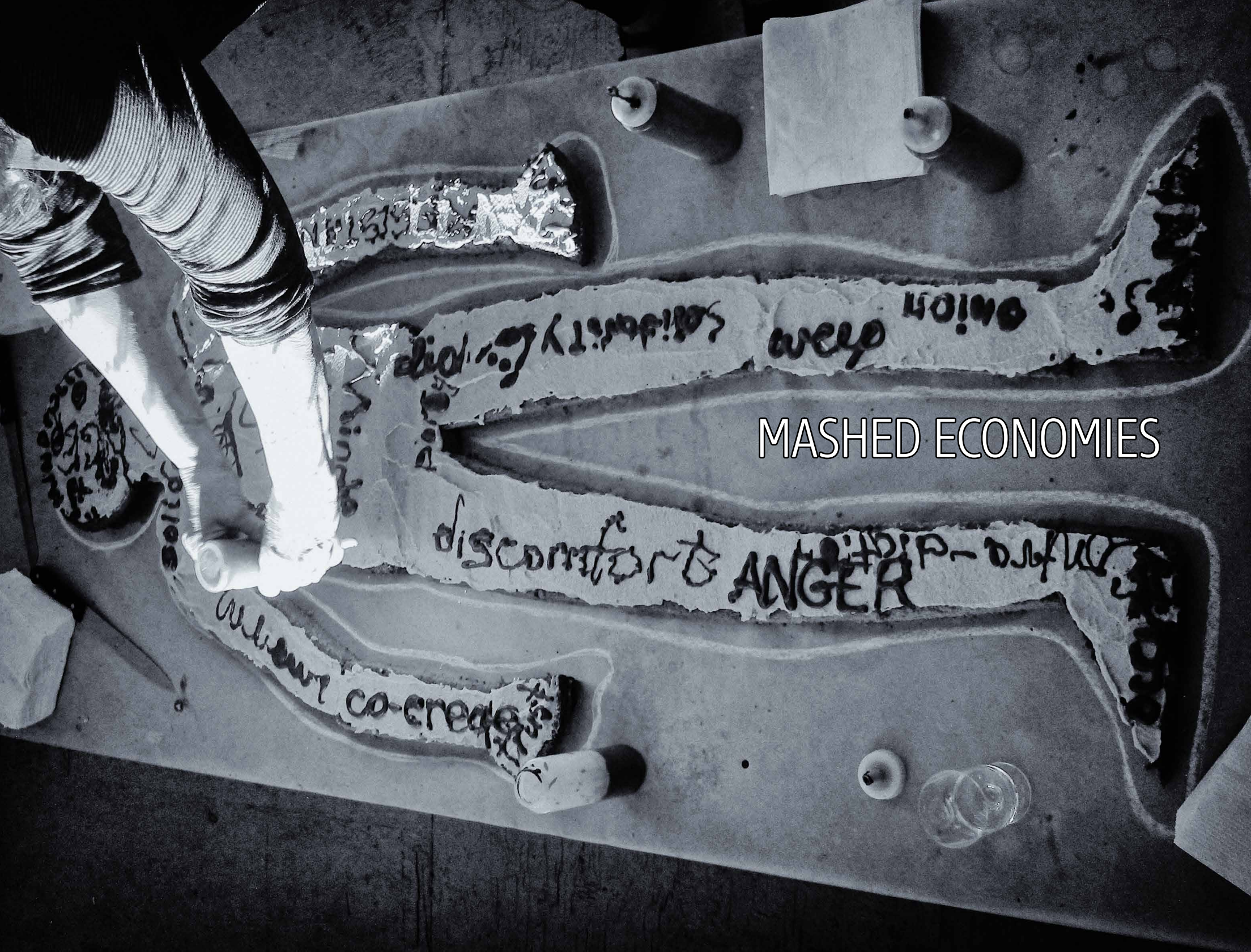
Scarboro Largo is the cinematic examination of an immigrant traversing time and memory to return to a painful youth, to face wounds of alienation and abandonment that never healed. Folding the past into the present, the immigrant returns to the house in a suburban gulag that he grew up in with his younger siblings, sans parents, decades earlier. He is an awkward adolescent in a school uniform as he walks back and forth in front of the driveway.

The work is durational—we are made uncomfortable by the protracted ping-pong sauntering so as to experience the tedium and despair of a life without a cultural context, without a home. But the movements are also playful postures and child-like steps to counter the Sisyphean repetitions of house, school and big brother duties without guidance. The music by Bach and Gould is melancholic but sweetly nostalgic. There is a female voice lovingly humming the melody (the missing mother?). At one point, we hear the same notes played awkwardly by someone just learning to play, making lots of mistakes. Of course, it’s our young immigrant playing—a poetic metaphor for his struggles and determination.

This cathartic ritual performance is an act of courage. Relive a pain that you didn’t feel at the time but carried all your life. You can leave the baggage and walk into the future.

You can see this clearly now with a tear or two. The last couple of stasis shots allow you to receive grace. You are in the film and outside it, looking in. You can examine your life and live it too.





solid
of
solid

1983

did not

weep

5

MASHED ECONOMIES

discomfort

ANGER

with P - 0.1

when co-creators

1983

MASHED ECONOMIES

KIM JACKSON

Mashed Economies is a collective, often consisting of two people: Rebecca Garrett and Kim Jackson, though others have joined for specific projects. It's a collective effort to dig into questions of relationality, value and representation.

We ask: how can art address a social fabric torn by colonial/capitalist histories?

What are the social, cultural, phenomenological, legal, economic and political histories that have brought us here?

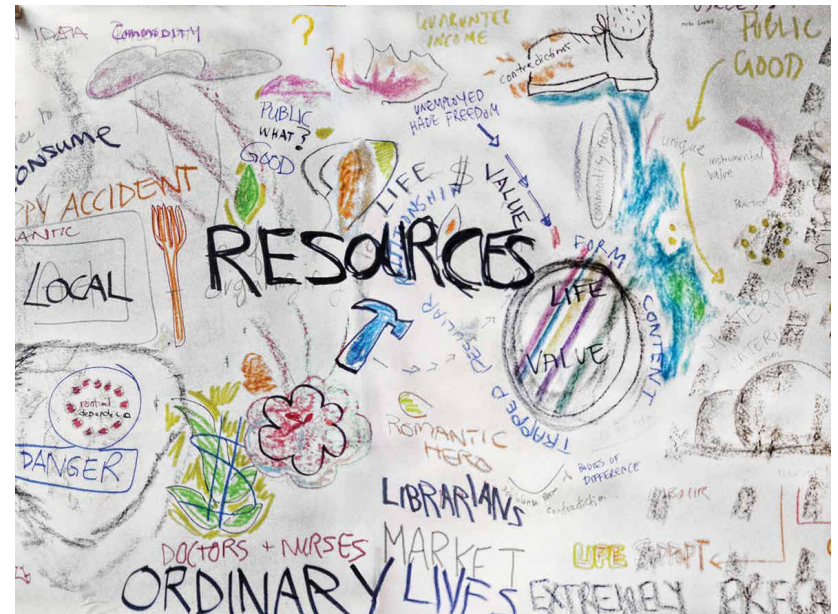
Where are we?

How do systems determine who will be incorporated into the political, social and economic body and who or what remains outside?

What kind of exchange relations do we engage with?

Do we recognize Indigenous trade routes that have crisscrossed the land?

The jagged edges of these questions cut to the bone of our sense of belonging and consciousness, opening the possibility of a radical re-visioning.



OCCUPY Y/OUR WORLDS: HOMUNCULUS

2011, PERFORMANCE WITH VIDEO AND CAKE

KIM JACKSON

Occupy Museums proposes art not as a commodity for speculation, but as commons inherited and shared by all. Mashed Economies collective members Garrett and Jackson offer an experiment in systems of art exchange that refuses to align with finance capital, but rather celebrates abundance and connection.

The Occupy movement resisted both neoliberal economics and the failure of democratized political participation. Resisting the expectation to give a specific political platform became an invitation for us to generate political meanings within our own contexts and embodiments.

A cake, vegan and gluten free, was created in the shape of a homunculus, a small human, as a representation and an offering.

A lively performative interactive workshop was structured around the presentation of short video works by Garrett and Jackson (exploring labour exploitation, the myth of digital freedom, Indigenous resistance to colonization). Discussion brought collective knowledge on how we survive, resist, and how we do or do not Occupy. How do all of our stories interact with analysis to give texture and meaning to our lives lived within colonial/capitalism? Fragments of our collective knowledge were written on Homunculus with fair trade chocolate sauce. Cake was offered and eaten and our collective gastronomic pleasure helped us to think about the inter-relatedness of the ways that we sustain ourselves and each other.



ABUNDANT FUTURES

2012, PERFORMANCE

KIM JACKSON

Mashed Economies members Garrett and Jackson proposed an interactive performative art philosophy embodied value debate exchange. In this neo-liberal period of growing income gaps and austerity, resources are scarce and the labour we desire to do becomes the free labour we are forced to do, and the paid labour we are forced to do does not support the lives we desire. How to realize not utopic, but necessary communities, as a recognition of our inter-dependent embodiments across difference, across class?

A series of cakes, vegan and gluten free, in the shape of organs, lay within a chalk figure at the front of the performance space.

Marxist philosopher Jeff Noonan delivers his thoughts on art and capitalism. The following discussion is mapped on a large piece of paper hung on the wall. Projected over the map is Arshile Gorky's *the liver is the cock's comb*—which models a visual language of history, expression and the body. Rebecca and Kim then move dialogically through a series of stories of organs in thinking through and about our bodies within capitalism.

The final act is to auction off the organ cakes by bartering: a brain for some labour; a heart for \$20; lungs for two religious icons; adrenal glands for \$20; kidneys for some knitted gloves; a liver for a case of beer; a uterus and ovaries for a poem; a penis for tickets to a show. And then we all ate the stomach together...



THE DARK LIGHT

2014, WORKSHOP AND PERFORMANCE

KIM JACKSON

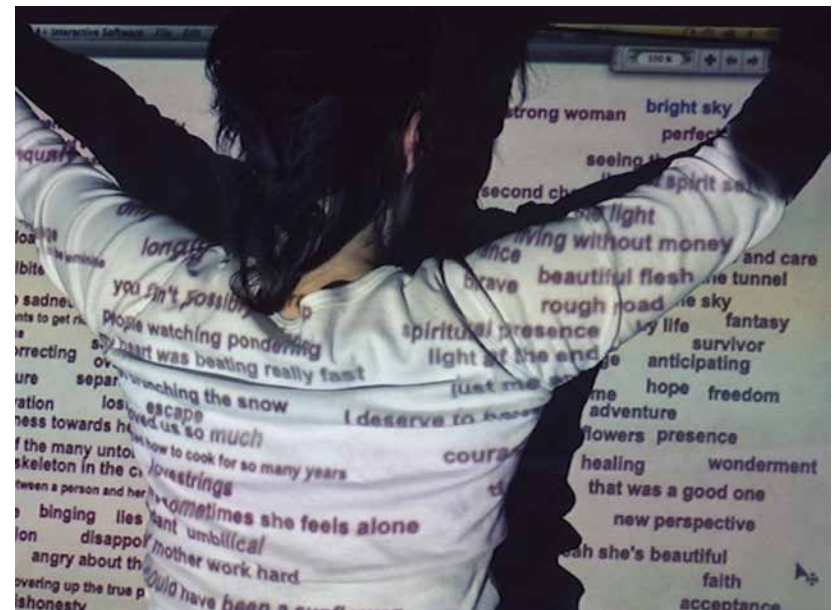
Mashed Economies collective members Garrett and Jackson with community member Marlene Bluebird Stickings did a video workshop with the Monday Art Group at a women's shelter in Toronto.

Within the disciplinary institutional structure that stifles being and communication, that infantilizes and punishes, we sought out our voices. We watched some short/experimental videos made by various women in the larger community. Videos that dealt with surviving colonialism, substance culture, poverty, gender oppression, embodied pain, discrimination, institutionalization, violence.

We talked, and from our responses to these videos we made a cloud of words. We recorded with Hazel Bell Koski, drums and shakers struggling to find a rhythm, enchanting in its idiosyncrasy. We called out words from the cloud. We projected the words onto our bodies. We recorded our art and art-making practices. We performed and recorded hand gestures that accompanied the feelings behind the words. Marlene Bluebird Stickings wrote a poem based on the word cloud. We recorded her poem and overlaid it with the percussion and our voices calling out words.

A poetic and layered expression among bodies struggling to survive and express their truths at the margins.

“I don’t understand that for years on end that for some reason there is homelessness. Homelessness, is it neglect from all levels of government? Greed. They give us these shelters with unhealthy dietary meals. Also treated by some staff given the shelter jobs. Is it cheaper to provide shelters same as having us provide food for food banks? Pushing out, marginalized oppression.” Marlene Bluebird Stickings



SHELTER VIDEO PROJECT

2016-ONGOING, VIDEO WORKSHOP

KIM JACKSON

A video collaboration between Mashed Economies members Garrett and Jackson, and a group of women who live (or have lived) at a homeless shelter in Toronto.

“We have been in the system for a long time and have the knowledge of what works and what is not working. Some women go in and out of the shelter for years because there is no system for them to find safe housing or shelter. People who are unstable have a hard time in the system and this makes it difficult for everyone. Gentrification has changed how people in shelters are seen on the street. People need to be educated about homelessness” Lisa LaBlanc

And so we make video.

“We need to show these videos in shelters so people know that they are not alone, that we are here. *Shelter Video Project* is another tool for creating real positive change in the community. We need to continue this work because the well-being of so many depend on it.

Women, who have become trapped in a system that does little to provide concrete support in finding alternatives, are subjected to unfounded judgments that result in humiliation, emotional abuse, and sometimes the threat of physical abuse, from organizations that are supposed to be helping.” Shirley Berry



TEST#3:SHELTER

2017, OUTDOOR VIDEO PROJECTION WITH DISCUSSION

KIM JACKSON

A guerilla projection onto Toronto City Hall was an experiment to extend the *Shelter Video Project* off the screen and onto the street. Co-creators engaged the passing audience in conversation about the realities of homelessness and institutional violence: “We did a screening downtown. It was powerful to talk to people who stopped and asked about what we were doing.” Lisa Lavoie

Test#3:shelter gestures towards the culpability of civic officials in the persistent shelter and housing crisis and the terrible conditions endured by shelter residents. “It feels as though the slide from a comfortable lifestyle to penury happened in a heartbeat. I found I could cope with the loss of money; however, I was completely unprepared for the myths and prejudice and punitive attitudes that surround homelessness and the effect this would have on my physical and mental health.” Shirley Berry

The voice of women’s lived experience is radical: “Some people have mental health issues and when they express their views they are considered losers. People’s voices come together and support each other and then can be heard. This is really important work for the women.” Minutet Nima

Housing for people, not for profit.





COMMUNITY PROJECTS



ONE COMMUNITY, ONE SWEAT

1995, VIDEO, 28:10'

BUKHAYO WEST JOINT WOMEN'S GROUPS IN ACTION

1995, VIDEO, 30'

DARIEN TAYLOR

With a small local crew, Garrett shot *One Community, One Sweat* in 1992 with her first Hi8 camera. Though she had initially come to Zimbabwe for an artist residency at the National Gallery, Garrett found her interests turning to community development and her practice to video.

One Community, One Sweat begins in busy, downtown Harare and follows members from The Book Team of the Community Publishing Program to a village in Beitbridge District, Matabeleland, near the South African border. Here the team meets with local community members—seated, suited men and some very busy women—and participates in an event to distribute the Venda translation of a new publication called, in English, “Let’s Build Zimbabwe Together.”

A community-driven publishing initiative, “Let’s Build Zimbabwe Together” was nonetheless an important national achievement. It hand delivered to the rural areas a community development text in five tribal languages: Shona, Ndebele, Venda, Tonga and Kalanga. “We are now part of Zimbabwe,” declares a local Venda speaker.

Garrett’s video takes place a decade after Zimbabwe’s independence from colonial Rhodesia, and the effects of ten years of free schooling on national literacy is evident. The dream of a united, prosperous, progressive Zimbabwe, “the breadbasket of Africa” as it was hailed, would not last much longer.

Garrett went on to document further community development work in *Bukhaya West Joint Women’s Groups In Action*. This footage was shot in 1994/5 in several rural locations in Bukhaya West, near the Ugandan border in Kenya. The video presents a number of busy, women-led economic

development initiatives. The various income-generating projects, including brick making, vegetable gardening, and raising poultry and livestock, are connected in a knowledge-sharing network under the umbrella organization: Bukhaya West Joint Women’s Groups.

Garrett’s camera is unwaveringly on the fierce women who make up this network and their achievements. But these successful rural businesswomen are eager to share credit. And so we have a lovely moment when a proud local network member introduces her smiling male assistant and comments with complete lack of irony on how well he serves the customers in her absence. We are also introduced to the local Kamila Band, who make their own instruments from materials on hand, and who were encouraged by the Bukhaya West Joint Women’s Groups to spread the message of women’s economic empowerment when members realized “music is part of mobilization.”

Despite their important content and their status as works of transition in the focus of Garrett’s practice, neither video is currently available. Garrett removed them from distribution when she realized that these works were, as she says, “meant to be kept in place,” and that it was challenging for under-informed viewers from the global North to see and speak about them without recourse to tropes of exoticism. They have been used by the organizations for whom they were made in international conference presentations and fundraising efforts.



BREATHLESS

2003, VIDEO, 1:55'

BH Yael

Following the start of the Second Intifada in 2000, the Hardpressed Collective organized *The Olive Project* with a call for videos: two minutes for a just peace in Israel and Palestine. We joked that the project was a good excuse to get together for some terrific meals, but the real context came out of a desire to address the intractable violence and increasing number of deaths resulting from Israel's ongoing occupation of Palestinian lands and lives. Taking off from the idea of an olive branch as an offering of peace, the call stipulated that the video works had to include an element of olives: oil, trees, branches or the fruit.

Hardpressed was formed in Toronto by Richard Fung, Rebecca Garrett, John Greyson, and myself, and expanded to include Riad Bahhur in New York and Jayce Salloum in Vancouver. We solicited short works and received an international response from locations such as Australia, Wales and France, as well as Palestine and Israel. The project was supported by Charles Street Video, an artist-run centre, which hosted the project online, a rather nascent platform at the time, and it premiered at TRANZ <—> TECH: Toronto International Media Art Biennial in October 2003. We also organized a live conversation with An-Najah National University in Nablus, Palestine and discussed the possibilities of solidarity through art. Sometime during the formation of the project, three of us decided to make work.

Breathless features a close-up shot of Spider Campos, Rebecca's partner, as he attempts to hold his breath for two minutes. The shot was slowed down and extended, and it elicits the desire to hold one's breath in solidarity, but then anxiety ensues, as viewers cannot sustain the length of the holding. They wait for him to take the next breath. How long must we wait for the cessation of violence? How protracted is the wish for peace in Palestine/Israel? Each subsequent year we thought "it can't get worse" but indeed it does. The violence, violations and land theft get worse. Spider is still holding his breath.



SAFE PARK

2001, VIDEO, 46:30'

JOHN CLARKE

In the summer of 1999, destructive social cutbacks of the Mike Harris Tory government in Ontario were being felt very sharply on the streets of Toronto. The homeless shelters were under great pressure and the suffering caused by growing destitution was severe. People were dying and beginning to succumb to despair.

With the Province cutting welfare rates and social housing, and with the City refusing to respond adequately to the homeless crisis, the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP) decided to take action. We set up a 'Safe Park' encampment, in Allan Gardens, in Toronto's Downtown East, as a place where homeless people and their allies could unite in the face of an agenda of social abandonment that was taking lives and causing such misery.

Our camp stood intact for a few days before it was attacked by the police and broken up, actions that were covered extensively by the corporate media. We were immensely fortunate to have had the struggle documented by Rebecca Garrett, in the form of her magnificent film *Safe Park*. While the media record is one of, at best, sensationalism, Rebecca tracked the course of events accurately and brought out powerfully the motivations, the grievances, the hardships endured and the hopes and dreams of those who were part of our fight.

Though it was driven off by the authorities, the Safe Park became a foundation for the struggles that lay ahead and Rebecca created for us a powerful record we could take into those struggles.



DEHCHO NDEHE GHA NADAOTS'EHTHE: FIGHTING FOR OUR LAND

2009, VIDEO, 56'

WANDA NANIBUSH

Dehcho Ndehe Gha Nadaotsethe: Fighting for Our Land is a successful example of collaborative filmmaking where the director and the community co-create a story. Rebecca Garrett clearly had the trust and access necessary to create what is an Indigenous, a specifically Dene take on the story of their people and land. The film starts where we always start with a creation story and ends with a clear vision of what's at stake in the battle between Indigenous inherent rights and the extraction economy—the future generations and our ability to live peaceably. There is a great use of archival footage and audio to show the long history of resistance to government, church, and RCMP practices of cultural genocide and the concomitant loss of self-governance, land, language, and community health.

The film drives gently through the constant negotiations with the Crown and the Canadian government for Dene control of Dehcho lands, deftly explaining the cultural differences at stake as well as the immense gulf in power. The Dene find themselves faced with an impossible decision between a hard-line resistance to resource extraction on the ground, or going to court, or succumbing to the government-enforced Comprehensive Land Claim process which forces the Dene to surrender their inherent land rights and cultural values. The feeling expressed is that a negotiated agreement is better than the government allowing resource extraction without any Dene input. Ultimately, the Dene spirit of sharing for peaceful co-existence and sustainable land management for future generations is getting lost in the negotiations. This is the contradiction most First Nations find themselves in, as Garrett visualizes.



WHY ARE WE MARCHING?

2010, VIDEO, 20'

AUDREY HUNTLEY

We are lucky to have Rebecca's work! How great that she captured events of this historic day (on June 24, 2010) and that it is part of our archive of Indigenous people and accomplices standing together for a better world on this Indigenous Day of Action. So grateful for some glimpses of great leaders, some who have moved on to the spirit world such as Art Manuel and others still active like Doreen Silversmith.

Set to the epic poem by Michael J. Paul-Martin, I am reminded by the depth and breadth of what we continue to fight for and I am inspired and grateful for our community and movements which is exactly what good docs should do. Miigwetch, Rebecca!



WHAT WORLD DO YOU LIVE IN?

2014, VIDEO, 90'

DEBORAH ROOT

Toronto is two cities, two solitudes. One has fine shops patronized by well-dressed, presumably employed people. The other is the street, where too many have a hard time. Poor people, some addicted, some homeless, inhabit these spaces, with lives to live and stories to tell. What makes their everyday struggles with poverty more difficult is the endemic brutality from police and, increasingly, from anyone wearing a uniform.

We shouldn't have to be reminded that poor people have the same rights, and deserve the same respect, as anyone else. But within a culture of contempt for people without money this is often disregarded. In *What World Do You Live In?* people living close to the street testify—they speak directly to us, telling us of horrific abuse at the hands of the authorities. These stories are delivered in matter-of-fact tones. This is the reality. Business as usual.

Abuse of street people has been increasing in Toronto since the G20 summit in 2010, where police brutality was rampant. Addiction and homelessness—or even presenting as a POC—are seen as crimes, with street people treated as criminals by police. As well, police violence towards Indigenous people is endemic in this country—Manitoba's infamous “starlight tours,” systemic racism by the Thunder Bay police, the racism and indifference that subtends MMIW, along with many other examples. Justice is class-based, we hear. Justice is race-based.

What World Do You Live In? is a work of creative advocacy and a passionate call for justice, inviting us all to ask ourselves what kind of society we want to live in.



TEST#1:CAGES

2015, PROJECTION ACTIONS

REBECCA GARRETT

test#1:cages was a project by an anonymous ad hoc collective of media activists, artists, and community members. The group worked with images generated by the community video project *What World Do You Live In?* Images from the film, and audio recordings from citizens who were illegally arrested, were used to ground underrepresented scenes from the past by projecting them onto sites where the filmed events occurred.

test #1:cages was planned to interrupt and intersect with Nuit Blanche on October 4, 2015. Mobile projections of images and testimony commemorated sites of the largest mass arrests in Canadian history.

Gabriel Jacobs was one of the many innocent citizens arrested at the time of the G20 in Toronto in 2010. A two-year Freedom of Information request carried out by Sanctuary during the making of the film produced footage filmed by the police documenting in real time the 36 hours that Gabe spent in a cage in the G20 detention centre during his illegal incarceration.

test #1:cages moved across critical sites in the city, bearing witness to violent police tactics and a concerted effort to violate civil rights. *test #1* links the policing of the G20 to ongoing everyday violence perpetrated against vulnerable communities by the state security apparatus.



MEETING PLACE ORGANIC FILM

2015, VIDEO, 57:56'

ANGELA ELZINGACHENG

Rebecca Garrett, in *Meeting Place Organic Film*, remains true to her life-long focus of creating and connecting communities of people through her work. While growing up, surrounded by industrial family farms—she and her mom would travel in the spring with a shovel in their car to rescue wild flowers and plants from certain death from pesticides. To the hardworking farmers this was at times seen as quaint and other times as a judgment. From these experiences came Rebecca Garrett's desire to build support and create a way to band together for those passionately committed to just causes.

Meeting Place Organic Film tells the story of a family who care deeply for the land. Since the birth of the McQuail's farm in the 1970's, they were considered by the surrounding industrial farming families as oppositional, political, and labelled radical— an othering in a tightly knit community. Rebecca weaves a story of people who completely circumvent the dominant economy and discourse of family industrial farms as the way to thrive as humans, and instead create a Place that is centred around the earth thriving, where “the human economy is a *subset* of the earth's ecosystem”—where all farming and family decisions are made for the health of the land.” Their life's work, in the words of Fran McQuail, was “one step at a time, one person at a time, one farm at a time—to sustainably farm and train enough farmers to grow organically until we could change the world.” The McQuails re-birthed ecological food growing, never separating the personal from the political—their seed saving is intimately connected to ecological activism and running for the NDP. At the same time, the McQuail family is an old story of farmers around the world who farm from seed to table, with the seventh generation central to the heart of home, community and the land.



BURSTING AT THE SEAMS

2016, VIDEO, 20'

JUDY REBICK

“A coalition of anti-poverty groups (OCAP, Toronto Disaster Relief Committee, Sanctuary, Street Health) wanted to hire me to make *Bursting at the Seams*. I proposed a model where everyone working on the film was paid \$20/day, which worked out very well. Many community members, artists and activists worked on the project. Yogi Arachara from OCAP played the role of producer and OCAP organized the Gala screening in front of mayor John Tory’s condo. The film has been used many times at OCAP meetings and other events about housing and shelters.” Rebecca Garrett

What’s the film for? The artist is working with OCAP (Ontario Coalition Against Poverty) to produce an organizing tool. I think films can reach people in an emotional way that other media don’t. OCAP’s organizing methods can be militant, a lot of people don’t relate because it’s too strong. This movie humanizes the struggle around homelessness and shelters.

We see shelters for homeless people, though only after they’ve left. The facilities are shocking but the film isn’t poverty porn, it doesn’t show the worst circumstances. It shows very articulate homeless people as spokes-people, as well as the activists. Especially that young woman who says, “Oh we’ll just go to jail for the winter because at least we’re warm and get food.” Why is it that we can put people in jail, which costs so much more than putting them in housing? Because when you put them in jail, someone makes a profit out of it.

I think it’s great that she’s working with activists so people can get to know them. OCAP have been doing this for as long as I remember, it must be incredibly frustrating because it’s only getting worse. I know from my own life that we haven’t always had homeless people in Toronto and yet we’ve become used to people living on the street.





INTERVIEW

ALL OF OUR LAWS RELATE TO THAT MOMENT:

AN INTERVIEW WITH REBECCA GARRETT (FALL 2019)

Rebecca: I went to Beal Tech (high school) in London, Ontario and studied drawing, painting and photography, a very traditional European art education. John Greyson was also there, and we both moved to Toronto after. We would walk the streets all night long picking up junk to make our sculptures.

I had painted since high school, but became dissatisfied, so when I got to OCA (Ontario College of Art) I wanted to do other things. The late 1970s was the peak of painting's impressionist period, in the experimental arts building people threw bucketloads of paint over canvasses lying on the floor. But I wasn't interested in feeling-based, expressionist-material work; the unreasoned material excess made me want to vomit. Over the next couple of years my paintings had less and less paint on them, and in the end they were like drawings with stained paper. That's what happened to painting. It disappeared.

I'd been doing a lot of performance, and made one for my graduating committee. The jury sat against one wall, all men but one. I came and sat in a chair facing them, wearing a skirt and carrying a suitcase. I put my hand under my skirt into my crotch and fiddled around while keeping eye contact, going from one person to another. It was very squirm-inducing. Eventually I pulled out an egg. I changed into a man and did elaborate things with plastic tubing. Over the previous couple of years I'd evolved a language of performance and objects. In an earlier performance I had a huge plastic sheet with water running down while Jorge Lozano stood naked on a pail for half an hour. I don't know what those pieces were about but I was experimenting and having a great time.

Mike: You were part of an unnamed collective that began in art school.

Rebecca: I started working collaboratively with Jorge on almost everything. His girlfriend Eva, my friends Jack Brown, Denise Cooper and Gloria Berlin became family. I remember so often we would work work work and then rush to get something to eat. We'd always wait too long and be too hungry and go to Saigon Palace and have big bowls of soup. Jorge would sit back and say, "It's good to eat food and be happy." We were all

serious about being artists, we would do whatever it took. I bonded with Jorge right away because we both had that drive. It wasn't until years later that I wondered: what was I thinking? I was a woman with no money.

I lost my sister when I was 22 and my mother three years later. My brother was out of the country and my father worked in the north. I have a god-mother, the writer Alice Munro, but it's not the same. When you lose your parents you have a sense of urgency. There was nothing to lean on.

In the 80s I would walk into openings and someone would ask, "How are you?" and I would say, "Not so great, my mother just died." (laughs) It would clear the room. I was reading Schopenhauer and Nietzsche and Hannah Arendt, as well as the Frankfurt School and French film theory, immersing myself in deep thinking, trying to make sense of things. Others were concerned about Talking Heads and having a good time. *This ain't no party.*

From my background in painting and drawing I started making films and performances. I would look at the space I was in and try to break it down. Space is something that forms us and in turn we form space. It is an evolving dialogue: creating spaces and trying to show the dynamics within them. Installation has come to mean how something is displayed. I saw it as three-dimensional drawing or sculpture, as the relationships between objects and images and bodies in space. By taking away the frame and rearranging the parts, new clusters of meaning emerge along with new narrative structures. Often it's about showing layers in a single space.



In *Project for a Divided House* (1981) I recreated a gallery wall inside the late Victorian house where the gallery was housed, and projected four super 8 loops onto both sides; the soundtrack (four sound loops) was embedded inside the wall. I wanted to separate things out so you could see how they existed by themselves, and then in relation to each other. Alice came to see the show and we had a long talk afterwards. She said she had found it helpful in trying to work out some structural problems that had come up in her fiction, the way I was taking things apart and decentering everything.

The big gallery then was Carmen Lamanna, and Carmen came to *Project for a Divided House* which was part of a joint show with painter John Brown. Carmen was interested in our work, though I was anti-commercial and anti-art object. I'd heard rumours about how he would pressure younger artists. He'd say, "Oh that's nice but make it really big." And then it would sell. He was a very patriarchal figure, and I felt I wasn't confident enough about what I was doing to go with him. I never regretted that decision.

Martha Fleming wrote a review of *Project for a Divided House*, and through her I met Lynne Lapointe and worked with them on a project that Martha curated for PS1 in New York. I was invited to join the board of YYZ Gallery, and was on the board for five years. I really loved art. In 1986 I went to Documenta, it was the year Beuys planted all those trees. But the problem was never quite fitting in a practical way with the art industry. Most of those 1980s artists from New York that I liked so much came from wealthy families. I was starting to understand how the art world works. Looking at the lives of writers made more sense, to find a way of working that didn't involve the art system. I never felt comfortable with the mythologizing of personas that goes on in that world. I'm anti-mythology.

Mike: It was a moment of irony and glamour. General Idea led the charge, along with the Clichettes' patriarchy simulations, Colin Campbell's gender-blending personas and David Buchan's arch dress-ups.

Rebecca: In 1985 I made *Crazy Jane and the Torrent Men*, a double-screen 16mm installation. I was completely broke and in debt when we finished. I moved every six months and would have been out on the street if Jorge hadn't let me stay at his place. It was a good time to leave the country.

In 1989 I went to Zimbabwe because my partner at the time was offered a job there. We lived in Harare and I really loved it. I went to the National

Gallery with my slides and they asked if I would be artist-in-residence. I shared a studio space in the gallery and had a darkroom there. I would take rocks from different places in the city, bring them to the studio, paint them with photo emulsion, project pictures onto them, develop the emulsion, then put them back where they were.

I started exhibiting at Gallery Delta, which at that time was *the* gallery for contemporary art. I did a couple of installations there, and also began working in video as a way to bring work between Zimbabwe and Canada. I was reading Rodney's *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, Ngũgĩ's *Decolonizing the Mind* and watching the films of Ousmane Sembène. I was trying to understand being in two places at once. How to be in another place that you're not from.



I began working with the Capricorn Video Unit, a non-profit equipment access centre that had cameras and editing gear, established and funded by NGOs. The person in charge was Annie Holmes, and she used development money to make documentaries all over Southern Africa. I started working with her, and did my own projects on the coattails. The first project was in 1991 for a Swedish NGO. The budget was tiny and I had just bought the new Canon Hi8 camera, which was a game changer because I could shoot without a crew. We went to a rural area where a nurse walked from village to village, training people to do home care for AIDS patients.

So many people had been sent home to die in huts in rural Zimbabwe. This woman gave out supplies and food, and trained people to look after their loved ones. We made a video of her for a couple of days and sent it to the Swedish legislature that finally granted her funds to buy a vehicle.

I was also working with The Book Team who wrote books collectively with over 600 villages, mostly non-fiction texts on development issues like water use. The team brought drafts from village to village, and went through them with the entire village—adding and taking away texts. Often the books were political and would get them into trouble. There were writings on gender and women's roles, how to do things democratically, how to share resources.

They asked me to travel with them. They taught me their collective way of working and I taught villagers how to draw. That was the exchange. Then I thought about going to a community, working with people to do whatever they needed. When I left Zimbabwe I went to Kenya and lived in communities, using development money. I lived in western Kenya and worked with the Bukhayo West Joint Women's Groups who had started a new economic model in their region. They built supermarkets and schools, they were basically in control of the entire economy of the region. They wanted to make a video to show what they'd done, and it needed to work for local high schools as well as international conferences. After being an artist I found doing practical things very exciting. If I look at my body of work, there have always been two parallel streams that never quite meet. Work with communities means facilitating a collective voice, which is different from evolving your own voice.

Mike: The tapes you made with communities in Zimbabwe and Kenya laid the ground for activist video you did here in Toronto with the homeless.

Rebecca: Yes, in 1999 I almost died in a hospital after being misdiagnosed by general practitioners in the emergency room. They were replacing emergency room doctors because of budget cuts by Ontario Premier Mike Harris. I was furious that they offered me grief counseling when I wanted them to make structural changes.

OCAP (Ontario Coalition Against Poverty) was in the news a lot because mayor Mel Lastman came up with a law saying people couldn't sleep outside. Instead of dealing with homelessness they upped the policing of homeless people and were trying to clear the streets. I went to OCAP

and asked if there was anything we could do together. They were going to take over Allan Gardens and create a safe park, a tent city of homeless people. Why don't we make a documentary about it? I gave an OCAP member a camera and he worked all night, while I worked all day. It took almost a year to edit. I learned the first version of Final Cut Pro from the user manual and was excited about the possibilities of a work flow that was more like writing. On the anniversary of the safe park we had a big guerilla screening in Allan Gardens that was thrilling, everyone who was at the safe park came. Years later we made another video about homelessness called *Bursting at the Seams*. They are both co-productions, meaning: they are co-owned and co-made.

Mike: Could OCAP folks make changes to the edit?

Rebecca: Oh yes. After I make an edit, I show it to everyone who appears in it. We come to a consensus. I take things out, I add. That's what I learned from the Book Team group.

Mike: You mentioned coming to a colonial consciousness in Africa.

Rebecca: I was very aware of the colonial architecture in Toronto. *Project for a Divided House* was about a Victorian house and the social relations embedded in that architecture. The city of Toronto was built for a few colonists. Those relations of power show up in the way space is constructed; for instance, government buildings look exactly the same in Toronto and Harare. You can see how law is embedded in those buildings because they come from the same colonial source. You can trace the idea of travelling from England to another continent and announcing it as mine. All of our laws relate to that moment of so-called discovery when Europeans say, "We own this." If you take that away our laws crumble, they don't exist. I could see that so clearly when I wasn't here.

In colonial situations you have a settler colony, you have a minority who are colonizers that are trying to manage all these other people in ways that are beneficial to them economically and socially. So you have to start making up rules.

My Zimbabwean cameraman had English parents who had thought of coming to Canada but got on the other boat. It was clear that you could end up in the colonies and have different experiences, but there were many structural similarities in the way law and order works and how populations are managed.

In Canada, there was a Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada who was trying to figure out how to manage the Indigenous population. He decided the best thing was to keep them “pure” so that white settlement could continue without conflicts. They would all be moved to Manitoulin Island. That was the origin of the idea of a homeland. Colonial officials regularly gathered in Britain where the guy from Canada would say: we’re trying this homeland idea, it seems to be working pretty well. Another delegate returns to South Africa and has the homeland idea written into legislation that becomes the keystone of the apartheid system, where racialized groups are kept in segregated areas.

These policies are designed to manage populations, and they continue today. Canada’s residential school system was a genocidal, apartheid vision of managing and assimilating populations and now our prison system has taken on the same role. There’s a huge number of Indigenous and racialized people in prison, that’s how they’re managed. All of our institutions do that in one way or another, and always have.

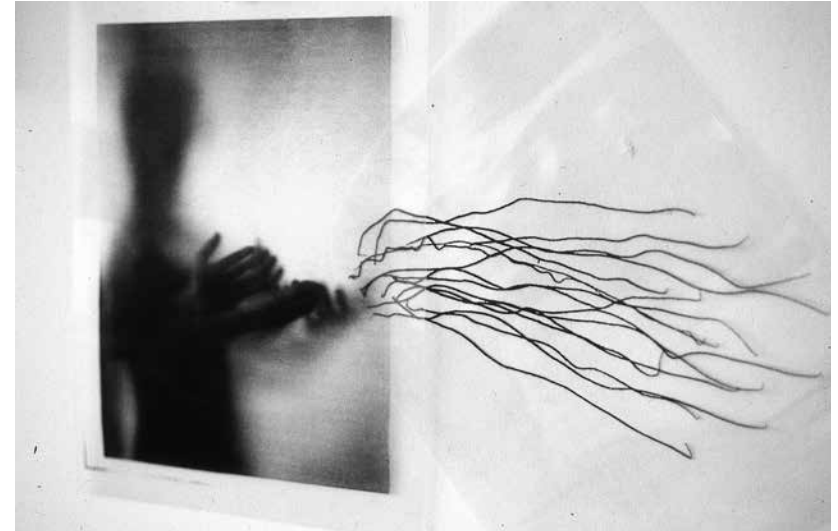
In Zimbabwe you had to think and talk about race and representation all the time but the Canadian art scene was very white and felt threatened if anyone brought up issues of race. There were also racialized cultural workers who were very pissed off. When I said I wasn’t interested in the art world, I meant I wasn’t interested in the physical space of the gallery, the antiseptic white cube. There was no way to live in there.

Mike: Do you feel that white-walled art galleries are an expression of whiteness?

Rebecca: Yes. I grew up in a mixed family and my parents were progressive liberals, involved in social justice. We moved a lot and always felt somehow outside. Being in a very white place feels uncomfortable. I don’t always understand the codes, the judgments, the way things work.

The person I lived with when I went to Zimbabwe was one of the first journalists that went into Rwanda with Roméo Dallaire. He already had PTSD for thirty years, but after that it was pretty bad. He was trying to file stories about what was happening there but editors assured him nobody was interested. Most African stories aren’t told adequately here, and these absences mirror elite political and economic interests and underlines the reality of the history of colonization. I see images as part of a global economy of representation. We control the flow of objects and images and the price that gets paid for them.

I’m very aware of the critiques of Dallaire and the whole white savior thing in those situations, but when I went I was part of a progressive leftie world that believed if you told the story it would change things. I didn’t believe that any more by the time I left Africa.



When I came back to Canada I didn’t want to make socially engaged docs, but I had no interest in the art world. I wanted to work out ideas about race but there was no one to have a conversation with. I wound up doing a master’s degree in fine art at York University, it was a safe space to experiment and explore.

I made a two-screen installation called *Listen* (2000) there. When I made *Continental Drift* (1992) I met Florence Chiweshe and visited her farm. While we were filming I wasn’t communicating well with my Zimbabwean camera person so there’s a long chunk of footage that showed Florence just standing in her garden, mostly close up, listening and thinking while I speak offscreen to the translator. I became so enamoured of this footage, I couldn’t stop watching Florence being Florence. Then at some point I figured out what was so compelling about this outtake. I wanted to try to copy her, and do it in the place where I was from, in the country on the farm where I had grown up. I set up the camera, and had another monitor with Florence on it and tried to copy her. I did that 15 or 20 times

over a couple of years. Then I put the images of Florence and I beside each other with a slight delay so it was clear that Florence was moving first and I was mirroring her in order to try to understand something.

I spent two years working on *Continental Drift*, though it was such a simple idea. I went to 15 locations in Canada and asked random people what they imagined it was like in Zimbabwe. Then I went to parallel locations (school, shopping mall, etc) in Zimbabwe and asked people what it was like in Canada. I spent a year doing a tape-to-tape VHS edit which was like doing a PhD thesis on race and culture and representation. It was all about how people see the Other, and what happens when these views are exchanged and interwoven. It was like a really complicated chess game.

Mike: Why did you start *search>geography>erasure>affect* (55:10', 2011)?

Rebecca: When I came back I understood Canada as a settler colony. Working through these politics in a more personal way, I ran up against my own family history. My sister committed suicide when she was 27, I was 22. She was adopted at birth from Manitoulin Island, where the first homeland took place. She didn't know anything about her birth parents and that contributed to her mental state. My sister led me back to where I was born, looking for hidden colonial relations, and how populations are managed using representational technologies that came from the military. I went back to where I was born on an air force base built during World War II to train radar technicians.

Mike: You show us a web of interlocking military installations in Southwestern Ontario, which include not only bases but troop housing and schools; new communities were being created.

Rebecca: At Ipperwash the military base was taken over by the Department of Defense and never returned to the original owners of the land. That resulted in a profound change in the relations between white settlers living near the military base and the Indigenous population, and the murder of Dudley George decades later. There was also a big shift in relations between the Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point First Nations. None of this makes sense unless you go back and uncover colonial history and the interests of the Canadian state. These interests are always dependent on and backed up by the military.

After I got back to Canada I did some work for the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1991-1996). I filmed a healing circle at a residential school. My partner at the time was working with Georges Erasmus, helping to write the report. There are many Indigenous communities that don't have so much in common except the Indian Act, a national policy aimed at removing their rights and culture.

For more than a century, church-run boarding schools were set up and Indigenous children were coerced or taken forcibly from their communities. Their stated aim was "to kill the Indian in the child." This genocide was the ultimate way to manage a population, it regarded Indigenous people as a problem that needed to be removed.

There was also the Sixties Scoop (late 1950s-1980s) where the state took Indigenous children from their communities and placed them in foster homes or with new white families. It created a generation that was severely abused. I realized that whatever your personal views or intentions, without structural change you can wind up reproducing the same relations of colonial power. That's why my work in the 1980s featured repetition.



Mike: The looping and repetition in your installations is also a picture of enduring colonial relations?

Rebecca: Yes, they reproduce themselves.

Mike: Why do you go to court so often?

Rebecca: I'm interested in the connection between the architecture of state buildings and law, and the way those laws reproduce values.

I'm from southwestern Ontario where there are three military bases: Ipperwash, Centralia, and the Clinton Air Force Base where I was born. I didn't know the Indigenous history of that area at all. I started going to the Ipperwash Inquiry in 2003 after Dudley George was shot by the Ontario Provincial Police in 1995. For the first couple of months the hearing asked Indigenous historians, including Darlene Johnston, to give the history of that area. They presented documents, treaties and land sales. I was trying to understand a history I hadn't had access to before.

The pre-inquiry happened in Osgoode Hall in Toronto. The room was filled with lawyers and city people and at one point a man from Ipperwash stood up and said, "You don't understand. This is our land." It was like he'd told them, "I have a beautiful dream." The lawyers had no way of taking that in, it meant nothing to them. I was so upset. Later I worked with the Dehcho First Nations for almost three years. Back in the 1970s they were the first Indigenous people to stop a pipeline.

The Dehcho have no treaty, their land is completely unceded. They won a court case in 1973 that concluded Canada is not the owner, the land belongs to the Dehcho. The government is still trying to make a treaty, but because the Dehcho have traditional leadership and governance, everyone in the community needs to vote. Negotiations produced a giant stack of documents, so how do you inform people? The Canadian government made a video but when they showed it to the Dehcho mistakes were pointed out and that video was never finished. The Dehcho said they wanted their own person to create a video and I was recommended. I said: "I'm not going to make this about you, but I will work with you as a community, and together we'll make a history of your land claim." They liked that. In the budget I bought production and post-production equipment to leave there and trained a few people. Many in the community became part of the production.

When I started working it was clear we needed to start at the beginning of time to tell this story, we couldn't just go back to the seventies. So it took a little longer than we thought. There were so many versions. I went to many meetings and negotiation sessions. There was a moment when an elder held up a map and said to the lead negotiator: "This is my land, why are you telling me which parts I want?" That map was very similar to the maps showing Palestine shrinking. The approach was the same—making smaller and smaller parcels of land available via lies and rationalizations. Seeing those connections, and how completely arbitrary the ownership of this land is, was big for me. Georges Erasmus, who headed the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, was their chief negotiator. He's a walking encyclopedia and he helped me understand how law operates.

The Dehcho spent five years coming up with The Dehcho Process to work out all the details of how to own and share and co-manage their territory with the government of Canada. It's a beautiful vision. Our whole country could be like that. Canada spent another five years deliberating and then realized that it doesn't fit with their treaty process—all treaties with Canada require extinguishment.

Mike: The permanent erasure of all Indigenous rights and ownership of the land.

Rebecca: That's right. Deep down most of us settler folks share a deep sense of knowing that this is stolen land. It's not analyzed but it drives us. There's a lack of love for the land, a lack of taking care of the land and the animals and plants and people on it. It's a failure of love, not just a political failure.

This vision of sharing the whole land seems so attainable, and it came from Indigenous people, not from us, and we couldn't afford to see it. It's totally tragic.

I keep thinking of Dylan Thomas' poem "The force that through the green fuse drives the flower." We may be limited but the earth is much bigger. I guess that's always where my faith has been. It's also essentially unknowable. All we can do is learn. Maybe that's why I was in experimental arts, because nothing is ever finished and you're always discovering and growing. The natural world is the one thing we can count on, there's a cycle of death-rebirth-regeneration. From a very young age I thought after I died I would become compost in the woods. That's still my hope.





ART, MOVIES, INTERVENTIONS

1980 And and Out, super 8 films

1980 Second Language, video, 30'

1980 Cine Blanc, film, 35', collaboration with Jorge Lozano

1981 Project for a Divided House, film/audio/mixed media installation

1982 Factions, multi-media performance collaboration with Jorge Lozano

1982 (More)Utopia, Photo diptych in scavenged frame, light halo

1983 Public School, installation (sound & audio), PS1

1986 Crazy Jane and the Torrent Men (2 synchronized 16mm film loop installation)

1987 Rude Alterations: Girl Asleep and Why She Died, If I Were You, Real and Imagined Love, Bad Manners, photo collages on canvas

1989 a moment of pure feeling, installation in three rooms: Marcel Loves to Dance (copper waterpipes and glass in men's washroom) and Men Who Dream (16 mm loop projection)

1990 Secrets, mixed media installation solo show

1991 Soul Containers, multimedia installation solo gallery show

1991 returning takes time, video, 18:56'

1992 Structural Adjustments, mixed media installation, solo gallery show

1992 an ordered absence, mixed media installation

1993 One Community, One Sweat, video, 28:10', collaboration with Community Publishing Program, Harare, Zimbabwe

1994 Continental Drift, video 54'

1994-1995 It's Good For Us: community self-management in Dadaab, video, 32' A community-based video training production on the politics of food distribution by and for refugees in Dadaab Refugee Camp, Kenya.

1995 Kamila Band, video, 9', music video collaboration with Raphael Tuju

1995 Bukhaya West Joint Women's Groups in Action, video, 32' Consultant, producer and facilitator of a community-based video project on women's economic power, for Bukhaya West Joint Women's Groups, Busia, Kenya

1997 Foodland, video 5'

1998 Mahoso: The Child in an Age of Insecurity, video 9:10'

2000 Sites of Struggle, three video installations: Double Bewitched (2-monitor video), Listen (2 synchronous video projections), The Impossible Dream (2-monitor video)

2000 Scratching the Surface, 2-monitor mobile video installation in the back of a 1989 Honda Civic Hatchback and on-site performance with the Tasty Collective

2001 Double Bewitched, video, 5:30'

2001 Safe Park, video, 47', co-production with Ontario Coalition Against Poverty

2002 Rooster Rock: the Story of Serpent River, video, 30', collaboration with Bonnie Devine

2003 Homeless in Toronto: Fighting Back, video, 27', collaboration with Deedee Halleck, Paper Tiger Television and OCAD students

2003 Breathless 2003, video, 2', part of The Olive Project

2008 Long Motel Night, 2:46'

2009 Dehcho Ndehe Gha Nadaots'ehthe: Fighting for Our Land, video, 68', community-based video and training production with the Dehcho First Nations, commissioned by the land claims team to tell the history of the land claim negotiations

2009 Northern Exchange, video, 12', for The Money Project

2010 Why are we Marching?, video, 20', collaboration with poet Michael J. Paul-Martin

2010 search>site>scan, video and performance lecture, McMaster U

2010 Earth Wide Circles, workshop facilitated in collaboration with Elder Vern Harper using video conferencing

2011 Occupy Y(our) Life, screening/performance/workshop/ritual/edible sculpture, with Mashed Economies Collective

2011 search>geography>erasure>affect, video, 55:10'

2012 Abundant Futures, performance/workshop/lecture/edible sculpture ritual/organ auction, with Mashed Economies Collective

2012 Mr. Businessman's Blues, video, 4', music video collaboration with Diem Lafortune

2012 The Other Side, video 58:13', collaboration with Spider Campos

2013 The Unknown Migrant, banner and performance in solidarity with Immigrant Movement International and Migrant Justice Event in Toronto

2013 that was then, video, 2:10', made for online project: Autorganizaciones

2011-2014 Sanctuary Stories, community-based video with the Sanctuary community (Toronto) documenting and critiquing police violence against vulnerable adults. Culminated in a number of shorts and the feature length video What World Do You Live In?

2014 What World Do You Live In?, video, 90', community-based video with Doug Hatlem Johnson and the Sanctuary community, about police and security guard violence against marginalized and homeless people living in downtown Toronto

2014 The Dark Light, video, 9', collaborative community video by Mashed Economies, the Monday Art Group and Hazel Bell Koski, Evangeline Residence for Women

2014 Revisitor, video 49 sec

2015 test#1:cages, guerilla video projections, collaborative project with the Sanctuary community, video artists, activists and G20 arrestees

2015 Meeting Place Organic Film, video, 57:56', community-based video, collaboration with the McQuail family, Britt Gregg Wallace and Daniel Negatu

2016 BURSTING AT THE SEAMS, video, 20', anti-poverty community-based video

2016 test#2:pipelines, guerilla video projections, a collaboration with Idle No More Toronto

2017 Please Listen trailer, 2', Shelter Video Project

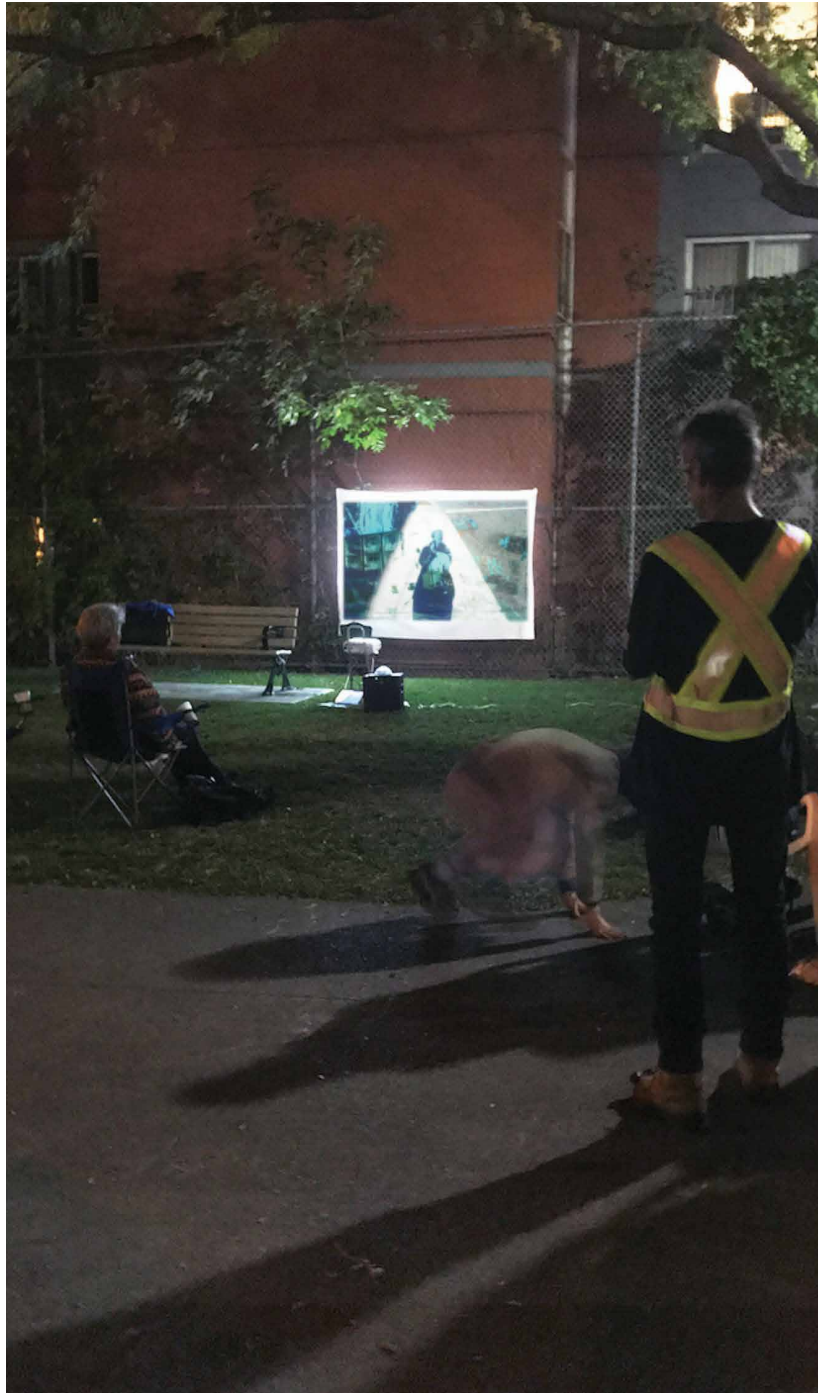
2017 Fire in the Hole, collaborative intervention: socially engaged foraging & eating/interactive mobile video projection, for Linda Duvall's In the Hole project in Saskatchewan

2018 test#3:shelters, guerilla video projections with Shelter Video Project

2018 search>site>scan>three sisters, video, 10', also performance with cooking and video projection

2018 Scarboro Largo, 13:20', collaboration with Spider Campos

2018 Silence: Duet with Immigrant and Robot, live dance performance with robot, interactive video generation and projection, collaboration with Spider Campos and Daniel Negatu





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