

AN ASSET RATHER THAN A HANDICAP

Given the velocity at which art histories are often suspected to be exhausting themselves, the pertinence of Lippard's review to exhibitions realized nearly half a century after its original publication date frames the antagonism between nationalist agendas and contemporary art as something like an eternal truth. This becomes obvious when we consider how many criticisms levelled in this article could have been lifted wholesale and applied to the most recent of the "large, lively, consciously advanced group exhibitions of its kind": Oh, Canada, the first national retrospective of Canadian art inside or outside of Canada in over ten years.

Organized by the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, the exhibition has special import in that the work has been selected by an American curator working in an American institution. Probably, a writer commissioned to review the exhibition could just change the circumstantial details of Lippard's review to adhere to those of Oh, Canada and it would still be the most prescient criticism published about the show so far.

For example, Lippard writes that "[o]ne of the more interesting tidbits of information offered by the catalogue is the fact that both jurors, William Turnbull and Richard Hamilton, 'travelled over 13,000 miles by air and Mr Turnbull added another 700 miles by automobile to visit works at individual studios.' The integrity of jurors willing to go to such lengths is unquestioned."

Forty-five years later, nearly every single article published about Oh, Canada includes some permutation of the following details: curator Denise Markonish spent three years traveling to ten thousand artists' studios meeting one

million Canadian artists across a distance of a hundred billion kilometres.

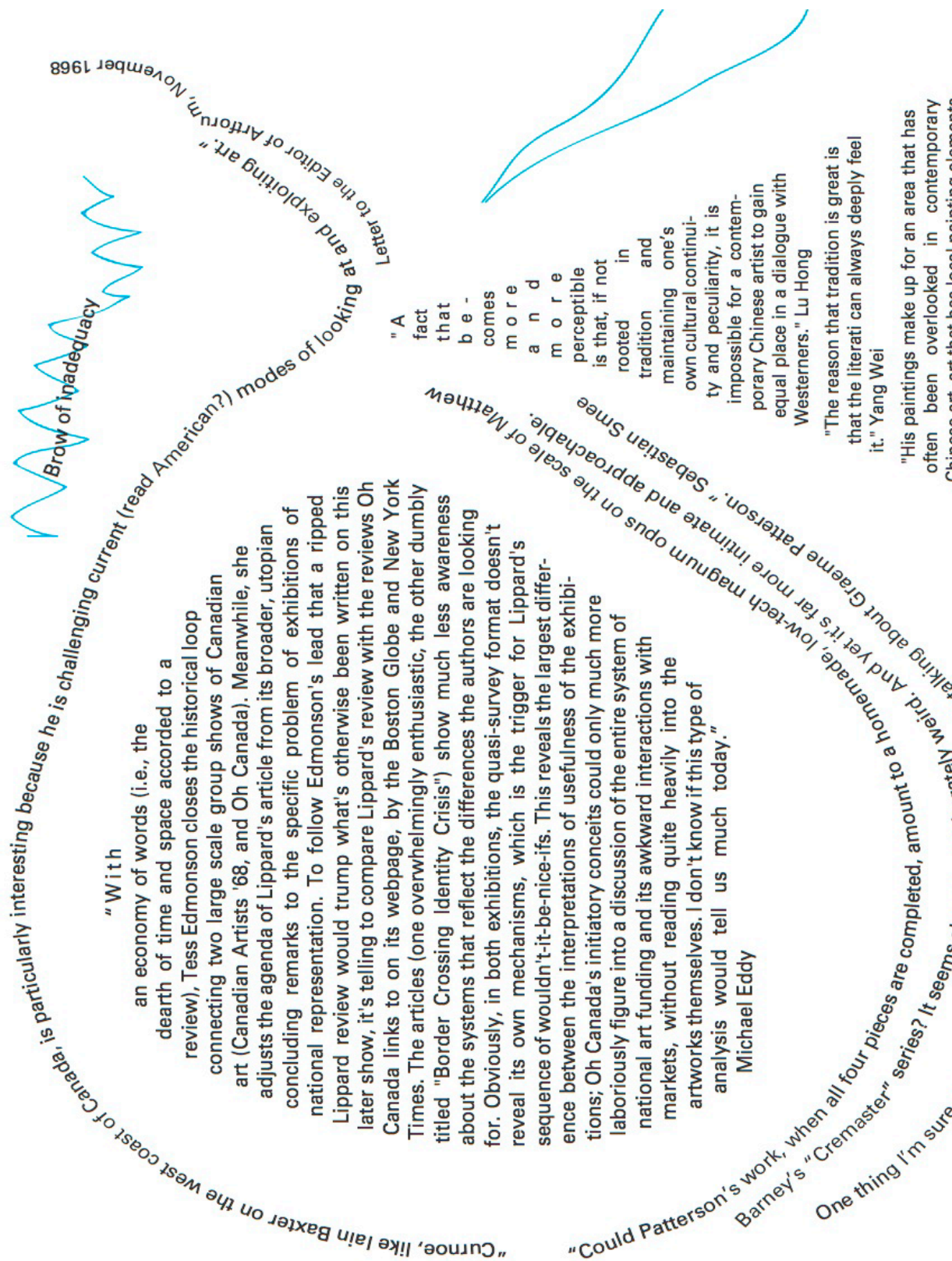
Activating the national image (and colonial mythology) of Canada as a wild and uncharted north, the superlative numbers are just as frequently accompanied by a press image of Markonish on a snowmobile. As this information traveled from press release to anticipatory feature to curator interview to retrospective review, it has come to constitute the popular narrative around Oh, Canada; fortunately for Markonish, this narrative works to justify curatorial decisions which might otherwise have to justify themselves. Nowhere have I read that Markonish's exhaustive research is evidenced in the details of a well-executed exhibition. Rather, the numbers attesting to a sort of art-world anthropology stand in for larger questions of who is included and how and who is excluded and why.

Lippard writes that the curator of the 1968 exhibition "expressed misgivings about the procedure 'at a time when the usefulness of large, mixed exhibitions is being challenged'." If that challenge occurred in 1968, is the common currency of these exhibitions in 2012 an indication of its failure?

Against this static continuum of antagonisms left unresolved—we could imagine a sort of horizontal field, where the criteria for relevant contemporary artwork forms one line, and the criteria for large, nationally-branded group exhibitions forms another, running parallel and never crossing over the course of a half-century—Lippard's exhibition review zooms in and out of focus, moving its discussion from the structural to the particular to the structural. In a proposition that could unify the two,

Lippard designs a comprehensive overhaul of the mechanisms by which art is studied, produced, sold, and disseminated. At a point when the internet has deeply mutated so many of the variables Lippard is imaginatively manipulating, however, the proposition that a conceptual distance from New York could be exercised as an asset rather than a handicap is made much less straightforward.

BROW OF INADEQUACY



of. It won't be long before the entire art world is almost as elaborately

Chinese art, art that has local painting elements. His effort in research improves the chances of contemporary art to be relevant in China and makes it a substantial phenomenon. It allows the world to see paintings with authentic Eastern origins, to read its contemporary values, its thoughts, and above all, its power." Zhu Wei's Album of Ink Paintings 1998-2008, published by Plum Blossoms (International) Ltd., Hong Kong, 2008, p.11.

"In 2007, Hong Yao's "conceptual paper-folding" artworks were featured in Art Monthly, a domestic periodical. A few years later, a French artist, Germain Roesz, presented folding artworks in his exhibition held in Beijing's 798 Art Zone. There was insufficient evidence to file a plagiarism charge, but at least we have come to know that Chinese artists' originality has surpassed the Western artists in one or even more fields of contemporary arts. Hong Yao and his likes are exerting great influence upon the world of today!" Chen Xiaoxin

"Then, you might ask, what do you mean by "re-tradition" and "re-Chinization"? To answer the question, it's necessary to date back to the Cultural Revolution. Many of those who have experienced the notorious tragedy distinctly remember that, in the society dominated by "far-left" politics, all art forms, including ink painting, had to serve the official ideologies by creating artworks in accordance with the discipline of "socialist realism." When the movement came to an end, almost all artists became completely disgusted with the dogmatic, even those who had been piously devoted to it in the very beginning. Hence, after the "Gang of Four" was smashed, a great many ink painting artists no longer complied to, but became eager to thoroughly transcend, the dictatorial "instrumentalism" and conventionalized traditions that had bound them for so long a time. This is the internal cause for the slogan "anti-tradition" becoming popularized."

"To foster play as a foundation of society, long-term experimentation would be essential, say twenty-five years minimum, with assessments every five years. The

usual, loudly touted, flash-in-the-pan welfare programs, tailored to changing political administrations would be out of the question. Financing would have to come variously from state education commissions, major public-minded foundations, industry, and private individuals, all utilizing tax programs and allowances as inducements more fully than they presently do." Allan Kaprow

"A sense of place, if not nationhood, does emerge." Karen Rosenberg

Based on your answers, you are not eligible to vote by special ballot because you must:

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- Refer to subsection 222(1) of the Canada Elections Act. Please contact us if you have any questions." Elections Canada

TO NOT REPEAT THIS MISTAKE

On Tess Edmonson's review of Canadian Artists '68 and the recent Oh Canada—where we should also include OKanada at the Akademie der K nst in Berlin (1982-83)—Michael Eddy's pictographic commentary tears at the structure of national survey exhibitions by stitching together samples of conflicting opinion to impugn the lack of criticality such exhibitions' have taken toward ideas of nationhood, citizenship, and tradition. Michael's fragmentary supplements to his own authored text together refract the dumbness (willed ignorance) and numbness (willed avoidance) of ideological curatorship. The participation in such a national survey is to be instrumentalized if a participant fails to not only acknowledge the embedded significance of participation ("talk"), but more importantly fails to not complicate the situation by owning up to the governing pretence in and through the included work itself ("action").

In his 1982 *Der Tagespiegel* review, the art critic Heinz Ohff tore OKanada to pieces while remarkably rating a rogue interventionist exhibition by the Toronto-based collective ChromaZone as superior. Concurrent with OKanada, ChromaZone mounted OKromazone at the Institut Unzeit from December 6-24, 1982, including twenty-two Toronto artists, as well a selection of video artists and filmmakers associated with *The Funnel*.^{*} Yet, what is fascinating is ChromaZone's press release from April 21, 1982, which passes judgment not on the problematics of a "Canadian" show in terms of Michael's critique cited above, but in OKanada's failure to be more formally diverse, which of course is just ideological nationalism from an alternative angle.

To not repeat this mistake, ChromaZone's

original press release is reprinted here in full:

"We at ChromaZone have deep misgivings about the Canadian cultural festival in Berlin, OKanada. Consequently, we've taken the initiative in organizing a secession show to coincide with the official exhibition. We don't object to the art chosen, rather to the method of categorization that has led to the exclusion of contemporary painting and sculpture.

This omission is unfortunate considering the resurgence recently of activity and critical interest in image painting, internationally and especially in Germany. Because this show has been compartmentalized as video, performance and visual art, the first two carry a weight disproportionate to the number of artists working in those areas. To lump painting, graphics, sculpture and installation art under the catch-all rubric "visual art" is to invite an aberration like the present one, in which three installation artists [John Massey, Max Dean, Betty Goodwin] are said to represent all activity in the plastic arts in Canada. This is a distorted picture to present to Europeans of work being done in this country.

ChromaZone/Chromatique has taken the lead in Toronto in providing a forum for new image painting and sculpture. We've also produced an art/fashion show, a Picasso commemorative installation, an architects' drawing show and a show of contemporary art from New York. By booking only three months ahead, we try to avoid structural rigidity; we want a gallery which supports the vital work of artists in the community which supports us.

One of our members, presently in Berlin,

has negotiated an exhibition venue. To minimize transportation and handling costs, we'll take a 'suitcase show', including a selection of artists the gallery has shown during the year. A fringe festival being organized in Vancouver will swell the ranks of the uninvited guests.

Canadian artists, from The Group of 7 to the present, have been subject to one constant irritant: the mythic, insatiable appetite of the public for Naturalism. This old spectre returns in the OKanada Contemporary Art press release, in phrases like 'reflections on the human condition', 'freedom and a search for space', 'a direct exchange with the public'. We are going to Berlin to present a different model of what Canadian art can be."

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 Kunstforum, Berlin, January 1983
 "Toronto, Berlin in a suitcase", Art Monthly, #62, London, Dec1982/Jan1983
 Peter Hans Gopfert, "Rumour of Burnt Paint Brushes Reflection on OKanada at the Akademie der Kunst", artmagazine, Spring, 1983
 Jennifer Oille. Vanguard, Summer 1983

*Artists represented were: Dave Anderson, Jim Anderson, Stephen Andrews, Isaac Applebaum, Richard Banks, Brian Burnett, Jane Buyers, Derek Caines, Cathy Daley, Andy Fabo, Rob Flack, Oliver Girling, Sybil Goldstein, Judith Huntress-Allsopp, Rae Johnson, Hans Peter Martel, Michael Merrill, Alex Neuman, Chris Reed, Chrisanne Stathacos, Renée van Halm, and Tony Wilson.

IN THE FEUILLETON (The Night of the Long Knife). "To not repeat this mistake"? Which mistake? One of the many shapeshifting permutations of ideological nationalism? This perplexing statement brought forth in Craig Leonard's performative examination of the 1982 exhibition OKromazone at Institut Unzeit in Berlin prompts me to contribute my voice to the chorus of others.

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In brief, after describing how the previous reviewer Michael Eddy addresses the lack of criticality in national surveys through a pictographic commentary, Leonard republishes the entirety of the *OKromazone* press release without offering additional commentary nor a clear position on the subject. In doing so, he obliquely addresses the blind spots of the early 80’s (if only by presenting them), while glossing over the political questions inherent in such a deeply nationalistic exhibition. Leonard’s gesture seems to convey his anxiety about investigating the problematic matters imbedded in the exhibition’s communication material.

MARYSE LARIVIÈRE

FALLING SHORT, FALLING
FORWARD

...

In pursuing its critical program, Craig Leonard’s *Rearview* considers the potential for national survey exhibitions – Canadian Artists ’68, Oh Canada, OKanada – to impact conceptions of nationhood and citizenship.

...

I was of three minds,
Like a tree
In which there are three blackbirds.

Wallace Stevens
Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird, part II

...

Why not simply state the obvious about *OKromazone*? ChromaZone, an ambitious Toronto-centric, exclusively white, and English-speaking artists' collective, misconstrued its exhibition *OKromazone* for a national survey of Canadian art. *OKromazone*'s raison d'être was to critique the exhibition *OKanada* for its dismissal of certain art forms specifically painting and sculpture. Yet, by advocating for formal diversity while failing to acknowledge its own cultural homogeneity, *OKromazone* recapitulates a problematic oversight regarding Canada's cultural politics at a moment when Canadian national identity was anything but certain.

In the end, Leonard's gesture repeats ChromaZone's mistake by privileging formal experimentation over political critique. Republishing *OKromazone*'s primary document as a readymade text maintains, ideologically speaking, the status quo because, to be critical, a conceptual (artistic) gesture must be subjected to at least a tiny wordy dent that invents new content. Access to an original document opens up potential for personal interpretations, but historical re-enactment is never neutral anyways... *OKromazone* aside, I am looking at all the national exhibition catalogues at Artexte, while the *OKanada* file is laid out right in front of me. I can't help but notice that every one of them

MARYSE LARIVIÈRE



When I studied geology, more than one professor, but one in particular whose name or face I can't remember, described a pejorative use of the word 'elegant' within scientific practice. If a theory or analysis was labelled as elegant, a dubious, simplified correspondence with the physical world was implied.

...

An ellipsis – three circles beside one another – replaces letters, words, or sections of text that are missing or excised. These circles graphically indicate absence. An ellipsis can also "... suggest faltering or fragmented speech accompanied by confusion, insecurity, distress, or uncertainty." In this case an ellipsis graphically indicates staggered dialogue, with the implied absence of an existing continuity. If continuity is not assumed, then the ellipsis can function as a means of connectivity: three circles that inscribe the trajectory of a line of thinking. A period – one circle along the baseline – fulfills a contrasting function; it indicates the decisive completion of a thought. Even within abbreviations periods complete shortened words. The circle's symbolic finality fills an absence.

...

bears similar ideological typos, these idiomatic expressions that are destined to fall out of fashion, sometimes decades after they were published, sometimes immediately. They fluctuate in style through time and context. Some are actually very funny. Others, not so much.

In *Canadian Artists '68* the sexist “artist-wife”¹ is particularly baffling, while the chauvinistic “now I know that he [Don Cherry] is also the name of a *beloved* host of *Hockey Nights in Canada*”² in the *Oh, Canada* catalogue published by MIT for the eponymous exhibition at Mass MoCA last year only brings to mind a favourite quote

1 YOUNG, DENNIS AND HAMILTON, RICHARD AND TURNBULL, WILLIAM AND MEKAS, JONAS. CANADIAN ARTISTS '68 = ARTISTES CANADIENS 68. S.L.: S.N., 1968. THIS HYPHENATED EXPRESSION REFERS TO A WOMAN AS AN “ARTIST AND WIFE”, UNLIKE THE MORE COMMONLY KNOWN “WIFE OF AN ARTIST”.

2 MARKONISH, DENISE AND AL. OH, CANADA : CONTEMPORARY ART FROM NORTH NORTH AMERICA. CAMBRIDGE, MA: MIT PRESS, 2012. PP.14. THESE ARE MY ITALICS AS CHERRY IS ANYTHING BUT UNANIMOUSLY LOVED.

MARYSE LARIVIÈRE

Recently I learned that the term ‘leap of faith’ was originally illustrated through a geometric description of a circle. One way to approximate a circle is to create a polygon with sides of equal length and continually increase the number of sides. The problem is that in getting closer to the circle’s form, the polygon’s number of sides approaches infinity. The circle of course has a single, continuous edge. To move beyond this impoverished accounting, to arrive fully at the circle’s form, a leap of faith becomes necessary. In this example however, the leap is only possible in knowing that a circle is being leapt toward.

...

While working with someone yesterday on an upcoming project, our conversations built and propelled the course of a Wednesday afternoon. Words passed between us, were repeated and expanded upon. Our conversations iteratively outlined circular paths of exchange, producing a form where description and inscription enable one another. This is a form like those of reading a text, engaging a thing, a room filled with things, living amongst other people – persistent working-models that simultaneously portray and fill the openings in their paths.

...

from Elvis Gratton: “Aille, y l’on-tu l’affaire les Américains!”³

This is not to mention how in the latter catalogue, the English language tends to level the diversity out of Canadian culture. To the American curator, it seems that English is not a cultural identifier but a given. Bored by *Oh, Canada*’s lazy Anglo-centrism, Quebec artists BGL’s quip “so let’s just take for granted that you’re perfectly bilingual”⁴ is a good reminder of how even language is racialized in Canada, especially in Montreal.⁵

3 FALARDEAU, PIERRE AND POULIN, JULIEN. ELVIS GRATTON: LE KING DES KINGS. MONTREAL: ACPAV, 1985. COLOR. 89 MIN. LOOSELY TRANSLATED WITHOUT ITS STRONG JOUAL ACCENT AS “THEY’RE SO BUSINESS (=COOL) THESE AMERICANS!”. THIS COMMENT IS MEANT TO BE UNDERSTOOD AS A CRITICAL SATIRE OF CANADIANS, ESPECIALLY QUEBECERS, WHO IDOLIZE AND MIMIC AMERICANS AND THEIR CULTURE.

4 MARKONISH, DENISE AND AL. OH, CANADA : CONTEMPORARY ART FROM NORTH NORTH AMERICA. CAMBRIDGE, MA: MIT PRESS, 2012. PP.287.

5 JONES, AMELIA. SEEING DIFFERENTLY. LONDON: ROUTLEDGE, 2012. PP.XXV.

MARYSE LARIVIÈRE

When the blackbird flew out of sight,
It marked the edge
Of one of many circles.

Wallace Stevens
Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird, part IX

...

Speak What?⁶ *Coudonc, de quoi on parle au juste?* Lost in my thoughts, I finally notice that the archivist at Artexte is glancing at me with a curious smile, wondering about my investment in this controversial national survey of Canadian art in Berlin. While the relationship between the politics of the time and the curation of *OKanada* is especially apparent to me (although only projected into the subtext), I am left wondering about what exactly was being smooth over and why.

Someone⁷ told me yesterday that ideological nationalism can involve writing political concerns out of art by retreating to safer discussions about formal experimentation and aesthetic value. Would it really be the case? Done with scrutinizing *OKanada*'s every document, what really stands out is the artist Geoffrey James being cited in most of the press material about the exhibition.

As one of *OKanada*'s exhibition organizer and head of visual arts at the Canada Council for the Arts from 1975-1982, Geoffrey James would know best if certain ideologies were promoted through such a project of cultural diplomacy. It is all too clear now that I need to ask him directly if, as I speculate, the 1980 Quebec referendum, and the constitution repatriation in 1982, aka The Night of the Long Knife, had any impact on the organization of *OKanada*.

Maryse: Looking at the OKanada catalogue, it's clear that a certain desire for communication thematically ties all the contemporary art together. It seemed like a great show but...

Geoffrey: There was no single artistic director of this show which may have been one of the problems. My job was not artistic director, my job was to coordinate. You obviously try to use your best judgment but you had to leave it to the individual curators. That was their responsibility. At one point I did suggest to Pierre Th  berge [the curator of the visual arts section of the exhibition] that perhaps his choices may not be the best thing for a German audience and he basically said "you're making me very nervous telling me how to do my job." So that was it. I did try.

He chose three artists. All interesting artists, but not in any way representative of the range of activity in the country. You had John Massey who made a film, not that audible, the sound wasn't that audible, about failure of communication, but it was in English and recorded in a moving truck...

A conversation with somebody with a speech impediment...

6 MICONE, MARCO. "SPEAK WHAT." *JEU: REVUE DE TH   TRE: NUM  RO 50*, MONTR  AL, 1989. PP.83-85.

7 STEVE LYONS. THIS AMAZINGLY SMART LITTLE BUDDY, AND ART HISTORIAN, ALSO SAID TO ME: "MARYSE, YOU ARE NOT "COPING OUT" IN ORDER TO SAVE YOURSELF FROM BEING CRITICIZED WITH THE INTERVIEW SECTION OF YOUR REVIEW. YOU HAVE A LEGITIMATE POINT IN CRITICIZING CL'S TEXT, YOU JUST HAVE TO EXPRESS IT CLEARLY AND SUBSTANTIATE YOUR CRITICISMS. YOU CAN DECLARE SOMEWHERE THAT YOUR FORMULATION OF CRITICISM IS ABOUT ASKING HARD QUESTIONS TO THE RIGHT PEOPLE (BECAUSE YOUR FORM OF EXPOSING PROBLEMS BY ASKING QUESTIONS AND LISTENING TO THE RESPONSE IS QUITE A BIT DIFFERENT FROM HIS, WHICH SIMPLY PRESENTS THE TEXT RAW)."

Yes, between a hitchhiker and an artist, about all the misconceptions that person had about artists... It was a very interesting thing, but that was just one piece. Another piece was a piece by Max Dean which involved a highly utopian idea of uniting East and the West Berlin through a telephone communication system. It was McLuhanesque and Canadian Peace Keeper model, but it didn't work at all. It never functioned.

I know! I've seen that piece at Ydessa Hendeles Art Foundation, and the only thing I remember Dean [Baldwin] saying about it is exactly that, "it never worked!" [laughter]

[laughter] And the third piece was a sculpture by Betty Goodwin. And that was it.

Why was that it?

Well that was all there was. There were only three. This was contemporary Canadian art.

Why did Théberge make that choice?

You will have to ask him about that. He will justify it to you if you have the courage to talk to him.

I might not.

Yeah.

At the same time, Peggy Gale also made language the crux of her curatorial statement for the performance section.⁸ And all the works chosen by Théberge all dealt with communication and language...

Except for Betty...

No, she had a megaphone inserted in her installation piece. It's subtle... but it's very much present.

The megaphone, that's right! You're right. Yes, yes. I had forgotten about that. So that's what led me to think that the political events of the time might have had an impact on the programming, even unconsciously...

It's very hard to say if it's unconscious, because you don't know about it. But I don't think it was conscious, I really don't. There was not a lot of political art in those days... We had the October crisis but that was a decade earlier and that was the last paroxysm.

But what about Canada's referendum and the constitutional wars (as Chantal Hébert puts it)? The status quo is still in effect...

8 GALE, PEGGY. "THE RESPECT PAID TO PERFORMANCE AND MEDIA WORKS." OKANADA. BERLIN, ALLEMAGNE: AKADEMIE DER KÜNSTE; OTTAWA, ONT.: S.N., 1982. PP.254. "IF THERE IS A SINGLE CONCERN UNDERLYING PERFORMANCE IN THIS COUNTRY, IT IS LANGUAGE."

Obviously there were people who would deal with it in their art, but I don't think this was mirrored in those three artists. Honestly, I can't see the connection.

Not so directly addressed in each work per se, but as communication and language emerged throughout thematically?

I don't buy it. No, no.

No?

You can theoretically say yes, but I don't know if there is necessarily a cause and effect. These artists have their own very specific preoccupations. They're not just antennae in the political world of the time.

Nele Hertling, probably thinking of the various institutional critiques performed at *dOCUMENTA 7* in the summer of 1982, mentioned that German audiences were interested in art that was much more politically involved. Do you think it is a missed opportunity on Canada's part for not having gone that route?

The Canadian art world was certainly not as a political as Germany. If I think of the tradition German artists came out of, what happened there in the first half of the century, and the complete political polarization of the country, it has never happened in Canada.

What triggered me to ask you about the influence of these political events on the management of OKanada was a brief mention of a direct political intervention in one of the press articles about the show, the only one as Nele Hertling points out, and how the Canadian Embassy imposed the presentation of a French-language play to make sure there was balance...

I probably had already left at that time. I left before it was over in 1982 and came back for the opening. I had completely forgotten about it. I can see that happening. I have seen it happen many times in representations abroad. Conversely, I have been dismissed from some world exposition exhibition, but we [James and Angela Grauholz] couldn't be in it because we were not Quebecois. We were Quebecois, living in Montreal, but we were Anglo-Quebecois, so we didn't count.

Reading *Le Devoir's* reviews of *OKanada*, I was expecting comments regarding language equity, yet those were the most generous critiques towards the exhibition. *Le Devoir* was much more supportive of the manifestation and didn't solely focus on the negative German press.

Yeah, but I think honestly what happened with the German press is that the contemporary thing just drove them crazy. "Who are these people? Who do they think we are? We want an artist we heard of, Michael Snow or the Rabinowitches with their post-Judd sculptures. Pierre did none of that. I think that's set off this chain reaction. I agree with you that the programming around the visual exhibition was brilliant and exemplary.

From reading the catalogue, it looked amazing!

It didn't look amazing, the event could have been amazing but there was terrible press.

Why so much focus on one negative German review in the English Canadian press?

Classic traditional insecurity. [pause] I was told they'd forgotten to invite him [Heinz Ohff, the cultural critique for the Berlin newspaper Der Tagesspiegel] to the opening!

[laughter] That might explain why he was so harsh! Similarly, did the negative reviews have an effect on the making of the Stuttgart iteration of *OKanada*?

One of the thing with the council is that we wanted the show to travel because at the time Berlin was an isolated place. In a way, it was not part of Germany. So we made a connection with the curator at the Stuttgart Kunstverein, Tilman Osterwold, who took parts of the Berlin show to make it his own exhibition, and it was great. And we were really happy.

Then there was an article in the Globe & Mail by Jeffrey Simpson talking to a diplomat who said: "Well of course, we really wanted to have something outside of Berlin." They did nothing. I realized there were people trying to get credit, institutional lies, and that's human nature. Emerson once said: "There is no limit to what humans can achieve so long as it doesn't matter who gets the credit." [laughter]

[laughter] Retrospectively, is there anything that has become apparent to you now about *OKanada*?

Chantal Pontbriand wrote an editorial in Parachute saying this is what happens when you leave a show to the Canada Council. Why not? But in fact, it was not the Canada Council. It was Théberge. I come back to that. I think he believes very much in his own taste system. Well, he made a huge and classic misjudgment.

Is it a really misjudgment or a strong personal statement?

A misjudgment of the audience. When you do an art show, it's not something done in a vacuum. You have to think about a public. It was not a public that had any idea about contemporary Canadian art. There was no background, no context, no real representativeness of what was going at the time here, and I think it blew up in his face!

A REVIEW OF:

1 – M. LARIVIERE'S IN THE FEUILLETON (THE NIGHT OF THE LONG KNIFE), A REVIEW OF CRAIG LEONARD'S REVIEW OF *OKROMAZONE*

2 – A REVIEW ON *OKANADA*

+ A BONUS INTERVIEW CONCERNING *OKANADA*

Night of the long knife alright. Maryse Lariviere's review/interview on Craig Leonard's namely 'performative examination' of *OKromazone* at Institut Unzeit in Berlin, is a concatenation of smart avoidances of the exhibition *OKromazone*. You soon grasp that indeed the exhibition impetus of *OKromazone*, as Lariviere attends, was to critique the exhibition *OKanada* for its dismissal of certain mediums and practices. This is where we say adieu to *OKromazone*.

Lariviere's parley with Geoffrey James¹ elucidates upon on her reasoning [moreover speculation] that the 1980 Quebec referendum (i.e. the constitution repatriation in 1982, aka The Night of the Long Knife) had little impact on the organization of the exhibition *OKanada*. While the relationship between the politics of the time and the curation of *OKanada* is particularly apparent to Lariviere, I am left wondering why *OKanada* has become the sole focus, other than a serious case of hot air. Further I am not adept enough in Canadian politics nor long knives, to discuss this, so I admit defeat and move onto her interview.

In one of Lariviere's countless footnotes, Steve Lyons makes the assertion that Maryse including an interview portion was indeed "not 'coping out' in order to save [herself] from being criticized with the interview section" [and further the next review]. I defer here, not in an

effort to present an olive branch to CL², but rather to prompt that the extension is in most ways interesting, yet entirely superfluous. On second thought however, I take back this assumption, mostly because I wish to repress a tendency to be myopic when the humility and knowledge of the reviewer [in this case Maryse Lariviere] is unknown, having recently fallen pray to what Scott Indrisek³ in his posturing of what a critical review is, i.e. to "malign and destroy one's opponent".

Aside from the fact that this is the third separate occurrence where I have read something this week that speaks about Ydessa Hendeles, the insertion of the interview subverts the review process, and further alienates the processes in which criticism happens. Lariviere's time spent looking at the national exhibition catalogues at Artexte, is well spent and admirable, as is her slipperiness in skirting the responsibility of more or less reviewing Leonard's texts in full; she offers an interesting cornerstone for further research. A crafty effort indeed.

¹ EXHIBITION ORGANIZER AND HEAD OF VISUAL ARTS AT THE CANADA COUNCIL FOR THE ARTS FROM 1975-1982.

² WHILE LEONARD'S REPEAT MISTAKE TO PUBLISH AN ENTIRE PRESS RELEASE IS SPOKEN TO IN A WAY TO ELUCIDATE THE FORMER AUTHORS ANXIETIES [RIGHTFULLY SO] OF CRITICALLY ANALYSING THE FORMER'S EXHIBITION AND COMMUNICATION MATERIALS, ALL LEONARD FALLS INTO IS THE COMMON TRAP OF DISCUSSING EXHIBITION HISTORIES AT A DISTANCE.

³ SEE [HTTP://REARVIEWS.NET/2012/02/21/ADAM-OREILLY-AND-THE-PROBLEM-OF-RHETORICAL-VIOLENCE/](http://rearviews.net/2012/02/21/adam-oreilly-and-the-problem-of-rhetorical-violence/)

