



## *Report on Findings*

### *I Know What I Want*

*part of the Space Audit Initiative*

*Other Sights for Artists' Projects Assn.*



## **TOO LATE!**

Whether it's melting ice caps, waves of social unrest, listing economies or just a general sinking feeling, the future is uncertain, and fluidly so. In waving or drowning, Other Sights proposed a series of events that focused our attentions, invited new ideas and put us face-to-face. With refreshments.

We began here:

The Rize Alliance rezoning application for Broadway and Kingsway compelled us to scan the horizon of our neighbourhood. We decided to create an opportunity for neighbourhood thinkers to respond to the situation by putting our resistance to one side and to positively imagine a better future. We pooled our speculative skills to riff on the possibility of economic and other forms of diversity, a different definition of sustainability: to use our critical and problem solving skills without a pre-determined agenda, to generate a different kind of conversation.

*The Future is Floating*

*March 15, 2012*

*The Western Front*

*hosted by Instant Coffee*

Annabel Vaughan, Glenn Alteen and Brian McBay made brief presentations; Lorna Brown moderated the lively discussion that followed.

*Success?*

A large group of artists, neighbourhood organizers and regular neighbours attended.

The discussion swelled and listed along very familiar lines of mistrust and fatalism: developers vs activists vs the city vs neighbourhood associations vs artists vs gentrifiers vs developers vs...

## *Failure?*

The Future is Floating showed us the problem with always being TOO LATE. Local responses to zoning changes are always reactive to concrete development proposals (the life boats have already left).

What are the effects of being 'too late'?

Who is served by the sense of being 'too late'?

How to be ahead of the curve?

What's the next rumoured rezoning project in the area?

We dropped the floating metaphor and anchored our intentions to the Kingsgate Mall site, and into the future tense.

In collaboration with The Western Front and 221A we began a publicly-sited research intensive about the possible futures of the Kingsway, Broadway and Main Street neighbourhood.

We conducted one-on-one interviews with local independent business people, cultural leaders and members of the design and planning community.

We gathered and circulated ideas from neighbours at the Western Front 40th Anniversary street party.

Reflecting on these activities, we decided to set up an Open Studio in Kingsgate Mall.



# WANT

*Open Studio  
Kingsgate Mall  
July 22 – 28, 2013*

The Open Studio was not a protest, a development proposal, or an exercise in nostalgia. Instead, we sought to evaluate space using the tools that artists have immediately at their disposal: our networks and our ideas.

Our question: What if artists, curators, architects, thinkers and citizens were invited to imagine these potentials? What surprising things might be found?

Using an aerial view of the intersection, we set out to model the desires that were offered to us on site and through othersights.ca. The model adapted, combined and recombined these ideas throughout the week. Central to Open Studio was the idea that these everyday spaces possess potential for creative projects that can see past the familiar narrative of building up and over what exists.

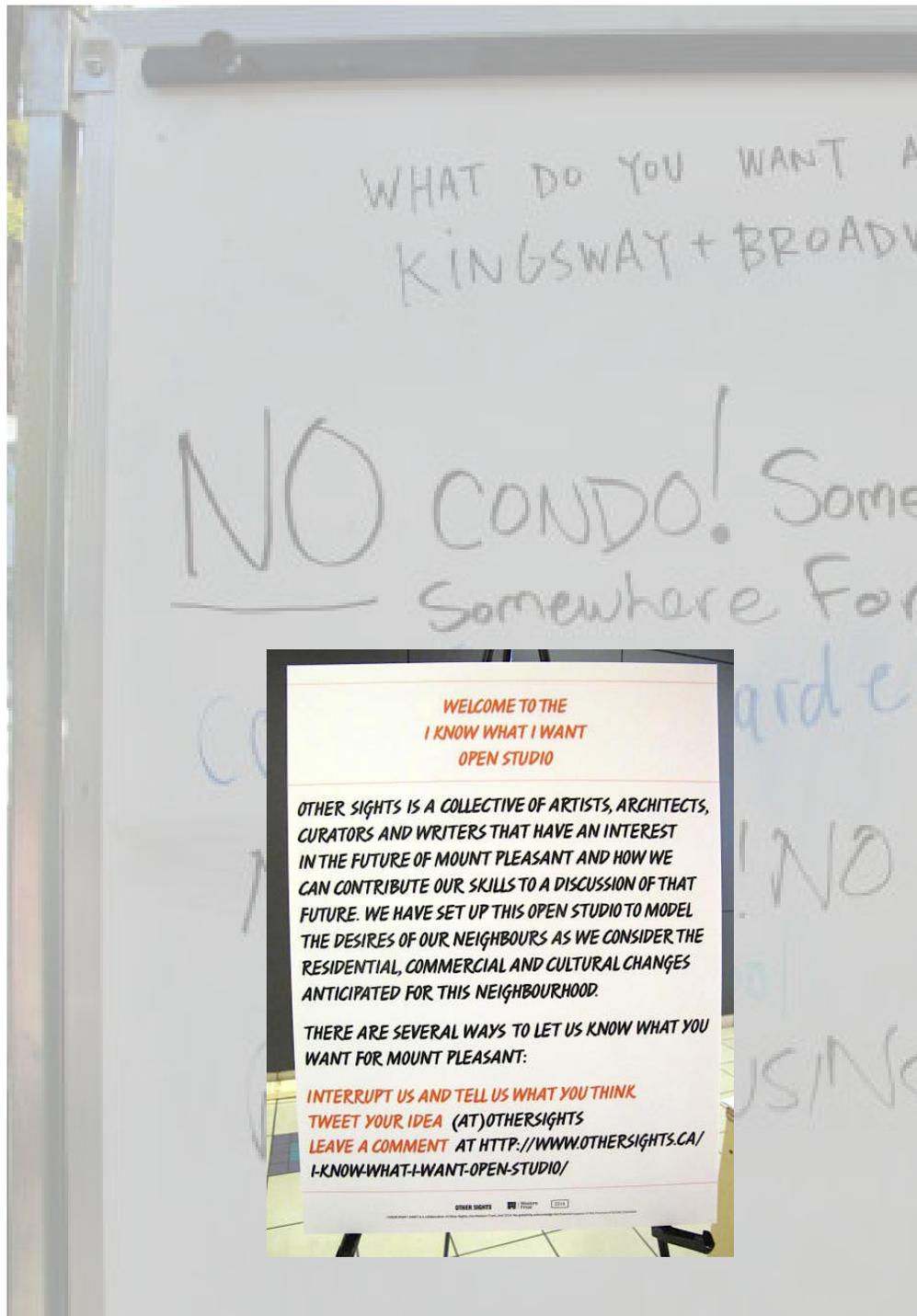
## *What We Wanted:*

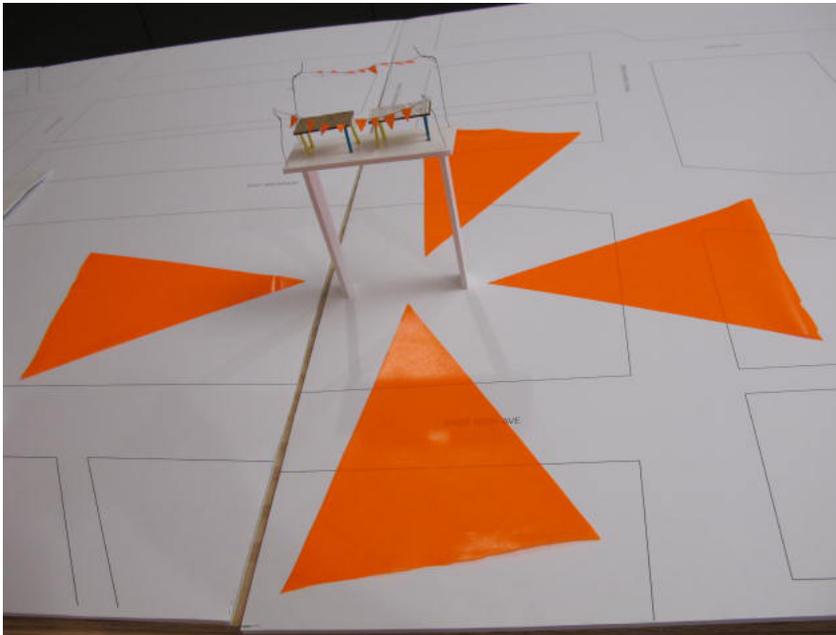
- ask the question *What do you want?*
- make art in 'public' space, as a generative act
- have fun and problem-solve with materials
- ask questions 'differently'
- struggle with the issues in a vulnerable way
- use dollar-store materials that are familiar, improvisational, funny
- be open and available rather than solicit
- be comfortable with how we do things: not really placing ourselves at the service of the public, but conversing with our neighbours through the materials

## *What Happened:*

We used signage to introduce the concept

We offered to make models of peoples' desires for the neighbourhood. We didn't make it specific to Kingsgate, but rather 'the neighbourhood',





through a ground plane map of the intersection

As the model grew vertically, the ground plane disappeared, and became more generalized

We tweeted images and posted documentation online at the end of each day

### *Responses:*

#### *“Who do you represent?”*

We were able to disarm knee-jerk suspicions, since we only represented ourselves. Once that was clear, people responded in an open and easy-going way and took it on as a place to express desire. People started to approach us more readily when we started labelling the discrete elements. It was a way in to the growing model, and allowed them to investigate each part in a more intensive way.

#### *“I have to think about this...”*

People took it seriously and sometimes returned to check out the results. By and large, they responded to the parameters that were set out. The non-precious materials came across as playful, serious and genuine all at the same time.

## CHANGE



*The Vancouver Uncanny* is the familiar experience of feeling constantly defamiliarized in what should be familiar surroundings. Change disrupts, often in a proprioceptive sense. Constantly called upon to re-familiarize oneself to one's city changes one's relationship to the past (*this is not what I remember*) the present (*this is better/worse than I remember*) and the future (*what on earth is next?*). Feeling overwhelmed by this experience is not just NIMBY but an effect of this eradication of personal and collective memory and proprioceptive discombobulation.

*What does it mean when the city is experienced as disposable?*

*My Life as Marketing* is the effect of recognizing, in ads, billboards and hoardings the day-to-day life of your neighbourhood. Enlarged and formatted are select objects, storefronts, quirky details, aestheticized debris from your streets. Excised are the ugly, unruly, and difficult aspects of the community, along with all the people.

*What does it mean when decades of work, creation, debate, investment gets flattened into a one-dimensional cliché, a brand that most cannot afford?*

Change & Time for Developers: Some (but not all) development companies are associated with fast change, and see themselves as agents of positive transformation, as 'city-builders'. Many companies were built on quick access to post-industrial, brownfield sites. Practices and procedures were created to fill up the 'emptiness' of vacant land. There are strong financial incentives to reduce project timelines. This has resulted in processes that eliminate points of friction in the critical path from land purchase to marketing to final sale. A civic policy of increased density has created a business model, a template, that is equated with podium and tower condo developments clustered near public transit.

Now, post-industrial sites are no longer available. The low-friction business model and template is applied to established neighbourhoods, creating conflict with neighbours who see their city as already 'built'. While increased density is broadly seen to have benefits for neighbourhoods, density and massings do not necessarily equate with towers.

Consultation with residents is a 'milestone' in the critical path. Potentially a point of friction, this part of the process is handled through a 'marketing and communications' approach. Essentially transitory, development



companies seek to ‘make a deal’ with the communities they temporarily occupy in the form of amenities.

**Change & Time for City Government:** This elected body is associated with slow change elaborated through ‘master plans’ resulting from community consultation. Financial incentives and business interests are applying pressure to accelerate consultation processes to conform to profitable timelines. Intended to ameliorate the negative consequences of change, community consultation has lost credibility with the public. Citizens have lost faith in a process to which they have committed considerable investments of volunteer time and energy. Rezoning land use is a particular flashpoint. Citizens contribute ‘positively’ and then react ‘negatively’ through organized protest.

Community consultation is seen to require a recognized methodology and communications strategy. “Access” and “accountability” are associated concepts. To deliver accelerated consultation processes with reduced friction, City Government attempts improvements to ‘communication’ and ‘engagement’.

### *Our Change Findings*

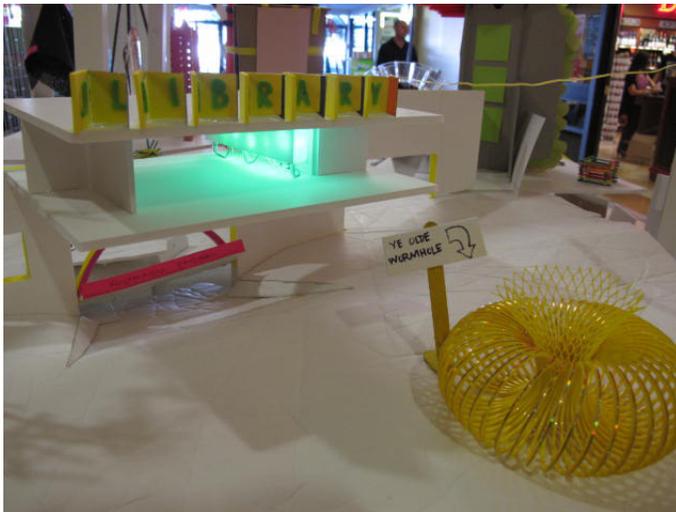
- Most people we spoke with want a significant change: most wanted things that do not currently exist and imagine a different future
- Increased density was recognized as needed and potentially beneficial, but the podium and tower form was emphatically rejected
- A high degree of scepticism exists regarding consultation processes. When developers initially present plans for heights and other elements that they know will be unacceptable, and then revise them as a ‘concession’, it is seen as a cynical tactic
- Many recent changes in the neighbourhood are accepted positively, such as amenities like the community centre and housing under six storeys
- *What is Wanted* is a range of housing, services, publicly accessible spaces, businesses, cooperatives, non profits, shared resources, energy sources, and states of being that are needed and desired



### *Our Time Findings*

- Many participants talked about their history in the neighbourhood and their experience of what we call *Vancouver Uncanny* and *My Life as Marketing*
- Accommodating fast change is difficult for those with modest resources. The fewer resources one has, the more time one needs to strategize, accommodate and respond successfully
- *Fast Change* interferes with careful consideration of which valuable aspects of a neighbourhood should be retained, and which aspects should be improved
- Time is necessary for a good quality of life and the ability to participate in all of *What is Wanted*
- Time is critical to local businesses: the book shop owner states the greatest threat to his business is that people will not have time to read if they must work more to live here





## WHAT IS WANTED

Using an aerial view of the intersection, we set out to model the desires that were offered to us at the Kingsgate Mall site and through our website othersights.ca. The model adapted, combined and recombined these ideas throughout the week.

*big public square*

*a reading bench*

*free coop daycare*

*open air karaoke with disco lights*

*a french sidewalk cafe*

*alcohol friendly parks*

*baby-friendly parks (no dog poo)*

*dog parks (poo allowed)*

*sculpture garden*

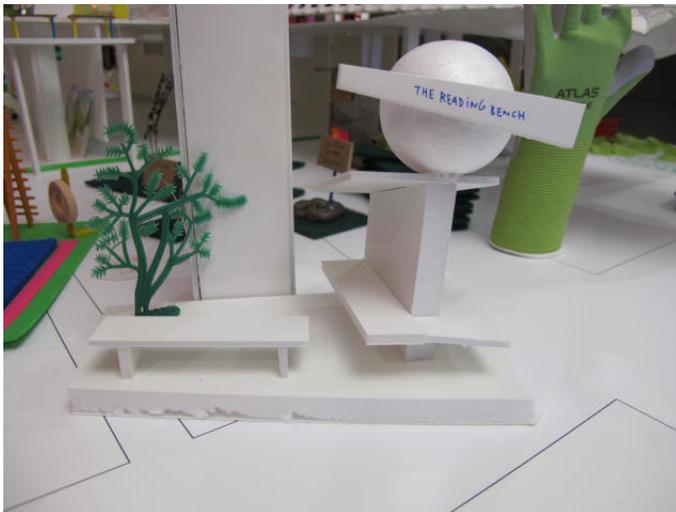
*pony ranch*

*School of Food*

*Brewery Creek uncovered*

*another library*

*a wormhole*



*labyrinth walk on site of Still Creek*

*music rehearsal space*

*hardware store*

*five buck lunch*

*portable disability access ramps*

*two minute bus waits*

*Mysterious Fires monument*

*open source pirate hub and hot dog stand*

*wind turbine power source*

*water turbine power source*

*swings*

*community drinking fountain*

*public housing*

*seniors housing with guest rooms*

*more time clock tower*

*a good jazz bar*



*sauna and steam room*

*swimming pool*

*vertical community gardens*

*neighbourhood bandshell*

*tipi housing*

*Kingsway bridle Path*

*shared Space*

*rooftop Gardens*

*condo destruction crane*

*multidisciplinary art presentation space*

*Milo's puppet theatre*

*flowers*

*production and studio space*

*a sense of enchantment*

*composer's amplification tube*



## NOT WANTED:

*parking lots*



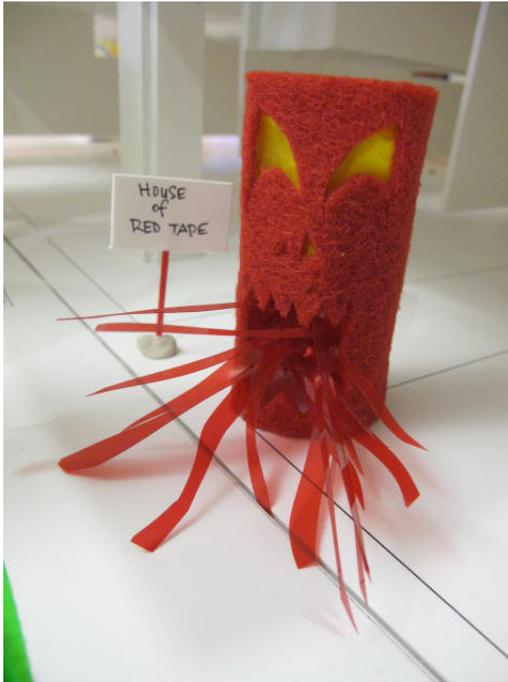
## THE SPIRIT OF NON-CHANGE:

*keep Buy-Low*

*don't tear down the mall*

*don't fix what isn't broken*





## THE SPIRIT OF OBJECTION:

*hot air escape shafts*

*House of Red Tape*

*community baggage*

*poverty ruler*

*The Invisible Hand and The Other Invisible Hand*



## **FRICITION**



Change has an energy and a momentum that must go somewhere. Along with most of the people we talked with, we want change. We began to think about the points of friction in the process of changing a city: points of friction that have been reduced in the systems and procedures of business and government as they strive to accelerate. People of the neighbourhood, however, experience a great deal of friction in realizing their desires, since they have relatively fewer resources to bring to or to manage change. In a series of conversations, we have reflected on Friction as a positive concept and a tactic that can be introduced by anyone at any point in any process.

Friction is not consensus. It does not operate to solve disagreement but to give space and time for it. Even though not everyone is happy, actions can be still be taken.

Friction is not massive, monolithic or total. It is on a small, living scale.

Friction is incremental, cumulative, building and repeating.

Friction is a productive, temporary stoppage. It can decelerate to an imperceptible level and divert into meandering paths.

Friction is a multitude of small steps that repeat, inviting more minor gestures. It is 'do-able'.

Friction generates and collects energy, simultaneously blocking, redirecting and releasing. It contains contradictions, and therefore doubt.

Friction can be as simple as asking a question: for instance,

Who Is Driving This Change? or What Do You Want?

## PLANS

Based on our open-studio investigations and interviews we have drafted a set of proposals for fostering a productive, conversation based, equal access oriented, friction into the process of neighborhood planning.

### *Open Before Striking:*

- adapt the system to favour positive friction in consultative processes
- see the generative potential of friction, even reactive friction
- promote desire rather than compromise
- value the investment people make in What is Wanted

### *A Future that is both Fast and Slow:*

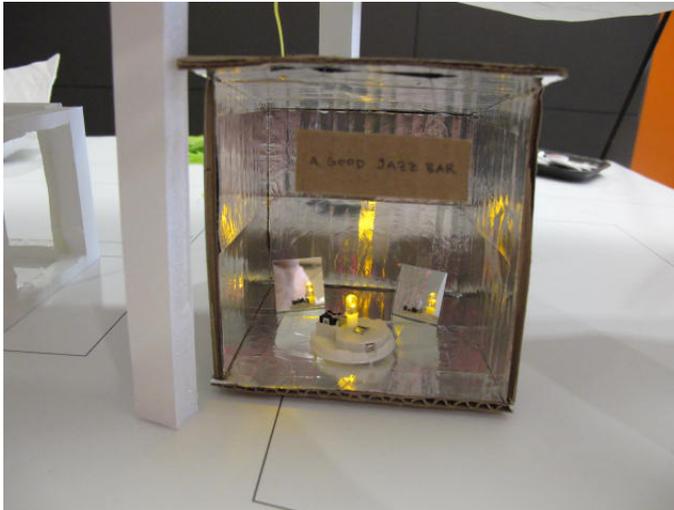
- build in structural overcapacity now with a view to a denser future
- accrete new 'storeys' or uses gradually, allowing for more consideration and responsiveness to changing economies, populations, and climates

### *Bottom-up Responsive Rezoning:*

- citizens develop what they want, and where they want, through cooperative organization and self-management
- collective development companies form to meet their own housing or production space needs

### *Resourceful Change:*

- reduce friction for those with relatively fewer resources to access loans, status and influence
- allow non profits, collectives and sharing economies the same breaks on interest rates and terms
- recognize the value and contribution of the small





### *Regular Open Studios:*

- place studio activity in public space, i.e. not hidden away
- employ studio techniques, such as open material exploration and problem solving
- contribute ideas rather than solicit them
- place everyone in an equally vulnerable position
- use critique methods to analyze and improve
- change up the participants regularly

### *Desire Archive:*

- an on-going, accumulative database of What is Wanted
- tagged More, Less, Spirit of Non-change, Spirit of Objection
- rather than ask for reaction, accept imagination
- responses take the form of alternatives rather than 'thumbs-down'
- communication is two-way, anecdotal, generative and good-humoured



### *Exercise Minor Plans:*

- contrast, expand or complicate the 'Master Plans'
- embrace a more contingent and nimble framework
- retain the difficult, the non-fancy, the real
- understand change as fragmentary
- acknowledge change can happen before all the information is gathered

## INTERVIEWS

Over the spring and summer of 2013, Other Sights members conducted one-on-one interviews with local independent business people, cultural leaders and members of the design and planning community.

### **CHRISTOPHER BRAYSHAW, PULP FICTION BOOKS**

*You've created a successful business model here in MP. Are there any threats to maintaining this location?*

Pulpfiction Books has been in this storefront for 13 years, and Main Street is the first of three locations, one at Broadway and MacDonald and one on Commercial Drive.

The major threat for any business in Vancouver is the commercial property tax rates. The assumption on the part of City Hall is that landlords are responsible for tax increases since they will ultimately benefit from the rising assessments of the property. The assessments are set by BC Assessment, a Crown Corporation based on comparable valuations in the neighbourhood. However, everyone knows that tax increases are passed directly on to the tenants. So, in 'improving' neighbourhoods like Mount Pleasant, these unpredictable increases are extremely hard to manage, and are part of 'up-zoning' fallout. Tax increases for my business have been 40% for the most recent year, and 31% the previous year.

Pulpfiction is a fairly fast growing business, but for those with slower growth, say for instance a small green grocer or a long-standing Pho restaurant, the rates of increase would make the difference between surviving and going under.

*What makes the bookstore successful?*

As a kid, I have a memory of the Payne Hardware on Lonsdale in North Vancouver. You could go there with an obscure nut or washer, needing another to match, and the guy in the button-up coat would go into the basement and come back up with what you need. That really impressed me. I felt I could provide a service that benefits the local economy, that has a level of seriousness – in that I work hard to find a title that someone is looking for. At the same time, I like to be as open to customers as I can – like the record store sign that says 'All tastes – no judgement'. So, I like to think I can respond to someone looking for Russian Constructivist design as readily as some-

one looking for some 50's science fiction or other genre. This relies on a certain longevity and stability in the neighbourhood because they are long term relationships.

*Would increased density be better or worse for business?*

I'm not opposed to density or development. Increased density doesn't necessarily translate into more customers. For a cultural business like mine, the question is: what kind of income level is needed to live here, and how does that impact on the amount of spare time people have? In Kits, the street scape is deserted except for Friday, Saturday and Sunday. On Fourth Avenue the number of empty storefronts looks to be about 40% between Granville and Alma. Higher population density might benefit supermarkets, certain restaurants and global chain coffee shops, but may not benefit independent businesses.

In more stable parts of the west side, you can see that slow growing businesses are viable there, while as you move east, the economy is heading toward only being able to support faster-growing operations.

*Do you have a sense of your walk up business versus your destination business?*

At the beginning, it was about 90% walk-up but that has changed a lot. Now it's more likely to be someone who has lost the decent bookstore that used to be in their neighbourhood or town. Coming to Pulpfiction is part of a trip to Vancouver for a lot of my customers. If the neighbourhood changes to the extent that people will need to work 14 hour days just to live here, walk-up business will definitely be affected.

We expect that the next major development will be the site of the Kingsgate Mall, which is owned by the Vancouver School Board. Do you think the owner, as an elected public body has particular responsibility to the public when it comes to development?

The school board probably sees its responsibility as generating the most benefit for Vancouver schools, when it comes to assets they hold. I don't really have a problem with that. I do wonder about the status of their tax predictability is, however.

*Do you have any particular thoughts about the Kingsgate Site?*

I'd like to still have a place to buy pig's feet and tripe. I'd like to still line up in a liquor store with a bottle of organic wine in my hand while the guy in front of me is buying the cheapest brand and we both get the same respect.

I'm not naive – but it's more real. It's important to have the opportunity to mix across different social classes and all parts of society. It's important to have a place where there's a level of comfort for everyone regardless of income, where people hang out at the Keno outlet.

It's interesting to look at what people complain about and what they don't. There

has been lots of development here that people have not been up in arms about: the community centre and library with market housing above, countless condo developments that are filling in former gas station sites, car dealerships, etc. They are low rise, much denser than before. What developments do people complain about? Those that are based on massive scale towers that are all out of proportion to what's around them, that need a full time marketing staff tweeting about NIMBYs, etc.

We are here to stay, while developers will move on to other 'frontiers'. That should count. It's like growing fava beans. You plant them, struggle to keep them alive through nasty November, December freeze, and so on. Then in the spring, when the first leaves start to unfurl, someone comes along and tills them under, to feed some other crop.

A consultation process shouldn't mean that you have to check your integrity at the door. If you want to attend a consultation event, the first price of participation is the mandatory accommodation of their process – such as meeting the marketing team, breaking off into groups with set discussion topics. You should be able to just state your opinion in response to what is planned and have it register without any mediation. Consultation should be neutral information-gathering. As it stands, the level of mediation dissuades people from taking part.

*Do you sometimes feel like you are increasingly living in someone else's dream?*

In last month's New Yorker, George Packer wrote an article about how the Santa Clara Valley of thirty years ago was a place where kids went to public school, an egalitarian community that has turned into record levels of wealth and consumption and also poverty and homelessness. His point was that the innovation so applauded in Silicon Valley would never happen in the same place today. Homogenization is a real threat – when all the storefronts are recognizable brands, when everyone makes the same amount of money, when there is no opportunity to encounter people who are living their lives differently from yours – important things get lost.

*Interview by Lorna Brown, for Other Sights*

**ALEX MACKENZIE**  
**FILM MAKER & MEDIA ARTIST**

*What do you do?*

I am an experimental filmmaker, media artist, with a focus on performance-based film and light installation.

*Can you talk a bit more about your activities as someone who has multiple activities? As curator/ artist/ institutional support for film communities?*

There is a cross-over between making work and building an audience for that work. And at least in Canada it's done in consultation and collaboration with arts organizations. I have a history of being involved with a variety of organizations as well as running my own. It split my mind between concerns around exhibition space and opportunity in order to create a community or an interesting environment that is welcoming to work that may not have a home. And that is half of it— and the other half is making that kind of work and finding a home for it. There have been huge shifts in that realm, with regards to technological changes and a reveal of where photochemical film lives.

It's interesting because I think of both of these digital and film moving images as different beasts, but they do cross over and they inform each other. And there is now a loss of film stock. There is shift economically with Kodak and Fuji, for instance, to maintain a thriving business, and there is a transformative moment with Kodak is now at its peak of the level of quality of film stock, and interestingly, that also means that it's over. They have been introducing stocks that are specifically used to preserve and act as intermediaries for digital products. The result is that their R and D departments are having an effect on art practice. The scarcity of certain stocks has generated a renewed interest. Instagram, for instance, has promoted an interest in old film stocks. It's a cultural marker that says that people curious and interested in moving away from a fairly contained, digital representation. And so there is an old saying: when the materials of a form become obsolete, that's the moment when it falls into the hands of the artists. This has happened before and it is happening now.

*How does this situation— artists deal with the 'discarded' media, and generate renewed interest— relate to our impressions of space, and an artists role in the value of space?*

It's tricky, because we are talking about economics and art. There are huge gaps, and crazy cross-over too. Artists are sometimes seen as the leading edge of gentrification. I believe that developers and property owners let places go to seed— they are the ones who are initiating the movement of artists. The criticism of artists as starting the ball rolling is a fallacy. It's much more paranoid than that— there are developers that are planning for this, by de-valuing something to make money in the long run (i.e.: save on property taxes, then develop when it is more financially viable). Artists are instrumental in this process, but progenitors of it. They are part of an equation.

And if you choose to live in a city, that is at its core about unlimited growth— that is the problem. For a city like Vancouver, which is bounded and finite in space, that becomes incredibly central. I think post-Olympics, the rapidity of development is really shocking.

*What do you think the value is of putting art in public space?*

Well, it is a big question, but if I look at the process, my understanding is that when some part of a city is being developed, the city will make deals with a developer to they can spend a bit more: we will give you more height, if you give us discounted rates on your bottom floor for arts organizations. Developers are more than happy to do that because they can have something attractive on the bottom floor and they recover the costs by selling two more floors. When that arrangement is going on, art is an afterthought, and becomes a decorative element on the front lawn— and that is not to say that it is not good art, or worthwhile, but its birth has been determined by economy and that's problematic.

I think it's a tricky conversation to have around the economics of art and funding, which is also a machine and has its own economy that is either valued or not valued by government or community. And so some thing like Edison Electric on the drive had no funding, and I wanted to see if I could make this thing happen without it. I did, up to a point, but it was a struggle, and interestingly, when I moved into Blinding Light Cinema it was also a struggle and a hobby, and received funding, but it was impossible to sustain with that much overhead. The sacrifice was that I just didn't get paid.

I do believe it's important to have spaces that can exist completely outside economic concerns. Otherwise you are dealing with some level of compromise and institutionalization. a natural growth, or give and take, in a city's artistic output should not be determined by economics.

*Given this neighbourhood, and where we are now, do you think it's possible to create a situation that could support this kind of growth for the arts community?*

I see no reason why it can't happen on paper, but I can see a lot of reasons why it won't happen, given current interests and policy. I think there are built-in limitations when we talk about doing this in the city. Something like what Intermedia in the 70s, for instance, did for the arts community. It was only five years of activity. An idea where you have a building that is open-ended, I don't know the economics of that space, but somehow the arts communities were able to cross-hybridize. You'd need a bunch of those, to sustain a significant community.

*Is something like the 401 Richmond in Toronto interesting to you?*

There's something there— I have trouble getting excited about it, maybe that's because it's in a building that is broken into rooms and floors and agendas, and grant deadlines and everything that comes with that. The bottom line is that you run into personalities and issues of different desires, and who

is loudest and most interesting. Sometimes the humblest things are worthwhile ideas, but they are not necessarily the brightest and biggest.

*Do you go to Kingsgate Mall? If so: what do you think about it? Is there anything that you think is "specific" about it? Do you think it reflects this neighbourhood?*

As malls go, it's my favourite mall. I don't like malls. but if I have to go to one, I go to Kingsgate because it has a charming, pathetic quality that is endearing, and it appears much more honest and real than most malls. The edges and the cracks show, the desperation shows, the priorities show. The symbolic priorities are writ large: alcohol, drugs, and an absurd amount of knick knacks. And so honestly I find it a depressing place, because it is highlighting everything that is wrong with a culture that encourages malls and what they represent for us. There's also something really small town-y about it. it reminds me of something you would see in a small town. It reverberates for me, as "I was here first, but it doesn't mean I'm worth anything."

*That is incredibly depressing. Do you think there is place for art in this space? As it stands now?*

I think any intervention that has to do with art in a space like Kingsgate mall is a good thing. Economically and socially there is something interesting conceptually going on with a place that tore away a school, and replaced it with a mall. Just from a physical vantage point, I find it fascinating to think of the space that was once a school building— a place of learning— that is now inhabited by a mall based on pointless consumption.

*Can you envision an intervention in this space?*

Blow holes in the roof and introduce a floating school idea, like a black and white ghost— looming and critiquing, simply by existing. I am always interested in heritage— histories of spaces, and it reminds us of what our priorities once were, and how these have shifted. What a city's demands are in a limited geography. Whether that is what the citizens demands are, that's the question.

Short Term Idea:

- 'drive in' movie theatre in the upper parking lot (with no cars)
- could do blow up screen, and broadcast on radio; could do audio on headphones or on speakers

*Would you ever work with a developer?*

No, but not for the reasons you might imagine. Primarily, because I don't have the mind for it— I can't compromise, and I think that might be necessary. I am against development. I think cities should stop growing. That makes no economic

sense, but I'm not interested in that, either. There are finite resources, and we are going to run out of them. It's a really depressing future, and I feel like development is "let's party while this ship sinks." Culture reaches its apex, and then it disappears, or crumbles. Progress itself is problematic— we imagine it as living better lives, but we are short-sightedly destroying our future. It's quite the opposite. I think it would be amazing if they took that mall away, and made a green space. I think it's tricky because the ideals of anarcho-primitivism are unrealistic, but that's what I am invested in. Our population base is too great to be able to apply those ideals to it. We can't even communicate because there are too many of us. We don't have infrastructure that allows for clear communication, or a genuine space of social equality. I was talking about cell phones the other day: I don't use one regularly, but when I do, I notice that texting supercedes talking— we're rarely texting for economic reasons— its cheaper than talking. Because of this economic impetus, that has changed how we communicate. Economic forces have changed our language— our brevity, our grammar, our connections are now defined by corporate priorities. Communications media, pop culture, our socialization in public space— all these are defined now by economic forces. So any significant shift in public space or behaviour has to somehow overcome these restrictions— i.e.: exist outside this economic structure.

*In a perfect world, with an infinite budget, what would you put here? Would you keep it the way it is? Would you change part, but not all? Would you demolish the whole thing?*

I would unpave it. I would have to create a sound barrier here, which could be art. I would have to buy it, and make it a park.

The tree condo:

- condo on stilts, with green park for whole city block and underneath.
- recovered stream running through
- SAD lights on underside for wintertime 'sun' bathing
- trees and shrubbery
- artist designed sound wall
- gehry "tree"
- gaudi "bark"

There was a tract of land on Saltspring Island that was going to be logged. No one on the island could afford to buy it, but one of the residents used to be married to Phil Collins. So she called him up and asked if he would buy it. And he did. And now it's a park.

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Alex MacKenzie is an experimental film artist working primarily with ana-

log equipment and hand processed imagery. He creates works of expanded cinema, light projection installation, and projector performance. His work has screened at the Rotterdam International Film Festival, the EXIS Experimental Film Festival in Seoul, Lightcone in Paris, Kino Arsenal in Berlin and others. Alex was the founder and curator of the Edison Electric Gallery of Moving Images, the Blinding Light!! Cinema and the Vancouver Underground Film Festival. He was an artist in residence at Atelier MTK in Grenoble, France and Struts Gallery/Faucet Media in New Brunswick. Alex co-edited *Damp: Contemporary Vancouver Media Art* (Anvil Press 2008), and interviewed David Rimmer for *Loop, Print, Fade + Flicker: David Rimmer's Moving Images* (Anvil Press 2009). Alex was recently Artist in Residence at Cineworks' Analog Film Annex in Vancouver.

*Interviewed on June 21st, 2013 by Vanessa Kwan, for Other Sights.*

### **EMMA LANCASTER, LANCASTER COMMUNICATIONS**

*Your business provides marketing and media relations, mostly for performing arts groups, as well as teaching and mentoring others in these skills. Why do you work here at Broadway and Kingsway rather than at home?*

I prefer to rent a separate office space alongside other smaller tenants: businesses that operate part-time, a quarterly publication, a landscape architect, volunteer-based organizations, a web designer, as well as shared rehearsal spaces for musicians. It makes for a really special atmosphere. We all have about 250 - 300 square feet. It provides some day to day contact with like-minded people but has enough separation and privacy. What makes it possible is its affordability. The reasonable rent means that the musicians - also a composer, an opera singer - can book a room with a piano for practice and rehearsal on days and times that are compatible with the other tenants. And organizations that don't have much in the way of operating funds can still afford a shared workspace while their employees have other, more steady jobs elsewhere. What makes it work is that we all take care of the common areas and fix things that need fixing ourselves. We don't really need a lot of amenities. On the street front, there is a catering business that has part time open hours for their baked goods, and an acupuncture clinic. The owner of the ground floor coffee shop owns the building, and is a musician. His decision to offer decent rent really makes it possible for small and mid-sized services and artists to have a crack at starting independent businesses. It contributes to the economic diversity of the neighbourhood. So, he attends to the important things, like fire safety, but we handle the maintenance and so forth.

The corner has really changed in the last fifteen years...

It's been interesting to watch as different retail outlets come and go. Several clothing shops - Jonathan and Olivia, Lark - overstretched the market, I think.

Their stuff was just a bit too expensive, and while Main Street is now a bit of a destination for fashion shopping, it still needs to accommodate the local buyer. So, as this roll-over happens, we see large storefronts sitting empty for months at a time, since they are too expensive for smaller or new independents. There needs to be space that doesn't require business owners to become loan dependent, which means their products and services cost too much for the local market.

There was a point at which I needed to decide whether to continue working on my own with a part time assistant from time to time, or to scale up to an operation with a staff of five. Remaining small gives me much more flexibility and it's much more sustainable in the long term, and as the status of my arts clients fluctuates.

*What to do see as most threatened here? What do you see as missing or needed in the neighbourhood?*

I'm concerned that low cost groceries, basic services like drug stores, and so forth will disappear to make way for boutiques and specialty stores. This would be terrible for seniors. I think they are already less and less visible on the streets and in the shops, except for Kingsgate Mall. To be on a fixed income without ready access to the basic necessities would be awful. In fact, it would be great to see more supports for people that need them, like a low cost community taxi service. And more social, comfortable spaces for seniors to mix with everyone else - I don't see too many of them hanging out at the fake park sitting on top of the RIZE development.

I like the idea of seasonal retail shops, perhaps on a time-share model. I miss a level of anarchy that was present here not so long ago. Temporary businesses, even restaurants that rotate over time, makes for a more dynamic neighbourhood, makes people pay attention to their surroundings. It would also keep it affordable for the tenants and the customers. The City could lighten up - why can't we have a 10 seat bar? If they are serious about affordability, they need to think it through commercially as well, and get out of the way. One tactic might be for existing older buildings to seek Heritage status - so that we can retain some low rise retail and office space as an alternative to overbuilt commercial spaces that only upscale businesses can afford.

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Lancaster Communications is a full-service communications company specializing in marketing and media relations strategies for creative business and the arts.

*Interview by Lorna Brown, for Other Sights*

## **MAIKO BAE YAMAMOTO THEATRE REPLACEMENT**

*What do you do?*

I make art, and mostly make performance, but lately have been venturing into more of a performance art or live art practice. I am a mother. I've lived in Vancouver for all of my life. [Gets distracted; sorry- i just saw casual hugging, and i was thinking about that.]

*Can you tell me a bit about your current research?*

The main gist of my research of what I do is boring, but than again maybe it's interesting to you. I'm interested in spatial relationships, and proximics— how humans interact in public space and all the social and political factors that feed into that. Developed by Edward T Hall— colleague of Marshall McLuhan— he basically developed this language of space, he identified four different kinds of space: intimate, personal, social and public. And he even went as far in a general way, with humans, to designate the actual distances. It's changed now because of the internet. (laughs) He talked about TV, and the telephone (i.e.: medium is message). Intimate is 1.5 feet. You and I are currently in personal space- 1.5 to 4 ft— and social is 4 to 12. Public is 12 – 25 feet. He talked about what kinds of things might happen at these distances: public talks, vs. parties, vs intimate experiences.

He did spatial tests on animals across generations, of rats for instance, and then applied that to human behaviour. And he went to different cultures and studied cultural specificities of space. So i've been poking at this, and what i've been doing is flipping the expectations of the 4 different kinds of spaces— so placing intimate activity in public space, and vice versa. I call it proximal flipping, and another part of this is very associated, but different is what i call interior proximics— so looking at how you feel inside of intimate space, and try and use this as a premise for how you create work. that stuff has been interesting but ambiguous. there is a project i do called: "and if i tied myself to you". i pick a site that i have a personal connection with, or that agitates me for whatever reason. i go there and tie myself to a particular thing— like that chair or that stool— and i travel as far as the rope lets me, and at the end of that rope, something else happens. usually i wait— it's often durational— i write a letter, i pack a sandwich, i sit and think. reference: Aokigahara is a forest on the side of Mount Fuji. It's called the "suicide forest", and people tie themselves to a tree at the edge of the forest and walk in to commit suicide. They tie themselves there so that they will be found— in Japanese culture it's very important that the family can find the body— and i think it's also because they can decide to come back, if they want to. This forest was the initial inspiration for this piece. When you are tied to that rope, it was an exten-

sion of intimate space— it's an extension of intimate consciousness. As you can see it's really fuzzy, and it's hard to articulate, but it's about extending intimate space into public space, through this idea of tying yourself to something. It's still pretty new, but i always ask myself: what if i walked around as if i was waiting for the bus while i cook dinner, or put my kids to bed. how are you in your intimate space— what if we extend this consciousness into public space.

*Do you think that architecture can encourage this consciousness?*

yes i do. i keep thinking about Andrea Fraser and her piece Little Frank and His Carp. I'm trying to think about spaces that i find similarly intimate in Vancouver. I have this contentious relationship with the olympic village, but they have these benches there that have dips in them the shape of peoples bodies, and everytime i'm there i want to lie in every single one. i think if architects thought more about it, you could instigate this feeling of intimacy. though i don't know if anyone would get anything done in those spaces.

In europe, i feel like there is far less fear around what is acceptable and non-acceptable in public space.

you know in london, how everybody tries to get as many pints in between 4 and 11pm? in the city, you see a bunch of those green spaces that are not bigger than this tiny space right here. and people go there and drink in that space— it's almost as if "it's ok to hang out here and do this", in this tiny caged area. It' looks like a zoo if you're not familiar with it, but it's perfectly ok to act differently in that one tiny space.

part of it is about what henri lefebvre talks about— the right to the city. you change the people, you change the city. but you have to get the people on board, so they don't do things like smoke crack at the VAG during an all-night Fuse.

*Do you go to Kingsgate Mall? If so: what do you think about it? Is there anything that you think is "specific" about it? Do you think it reflects this neighbourhood?*

i have a really mixed relationship to the space. this was my go-to mall for a little while. the drug store, the liquor store, the buy low and the dollar store, i could get anything i needed. every so often they would have this place that sold amazing candies and nuts. i lived close by for 4 years and we came here all the time. we used to call it— and this is awful— 'skid gate mall'. but you feel a particular demographic when you are here— and i'm part of that. i love this mall, but at the same time, i would not come here to hang out here. except for now— with you. it's a throughoufare, not a hang out space.

*Have you ever "intervened" artistically in an unusual space like this?*

no. funnily enough i have had a desire to work at a mall, but more of a sub-

urban mall. this place is more unsettling, for some reason. other malls are more watered down. i don't think they want people loitering here. it's small, and it's more practical than anything else. it's a very useful mall.

*What kind of intervention/ installation/ production might you envision in a space like this?*

Parking lot residencies:

- available to both artists and families and business owners, or whoever, who could engage and occupy this space for a variable amount of time, to be productive in some way— to make things, to have a day care, a festival, to live, to study. It would be available via an application process. Think of Antony Gormley's project at the Fourth Plinth in Trafalgar Square— where you rent space to perform whatever you want to. this would be a version of that, but more embedded. The spaces could range from a single parking spot to a full lot, depending on the activity and the schedule. The parking lots are ugly, but so interesting.

*In a perfect world, with an infinite budget, what would you put here? Would you keep it the way it is? Would you change part, but not all? Would you demolish the whole thing?*

I would hope for a building that is both commercial and residential (inspired by building in japan- look this up?). we take this existing building away and replace it with a giant grassy mountain, with hobbit houses in the grassy knoll. cisterns and all that shit— super environmental. and above the grassy knoll, you would have businesses and shops, housed in the tower. and on top of that, there would be fancy condos at the very top, for the fancy schmancy people. the middle section would be: services and a pool, maybe a racquet ball court, medical clinic, the equivalent of kingsgate mall in the middle section. it would need to represent all aspects of the community: business, non-profit, health services, shops. Living spaces on the bottom. The "stacking" of it— and putting the residential spaces on the bottom and top— changes the way people think about the community's priorities.

*Interviewed on June 19th, 2013 by Vanessa Kwan, for OtherSights.*

**DEANNE ACHONG**  
**DIAMEDIA**

*"I'm concerned when the neighbourhood is presented as something to consume as opposed to something we all produce."*

*How long have you worked and operated DiaMedia in the neighbourhood?*

I actually did my training in digital media and video, after finishing my degree, at Main and Third as part of a program co-presented by the Western Front and Electronic Arts, and then I had an office/studio at Main and 6th, so I've watched the neighbourhood change a lot. I've been in the building at Broadway and Kingsway for four years. It is an amazing and very special space that includes a music rehearsal space for a string ensemble, another one used by an opera singer, a publicist business, and alternative health therapies. It's a really warm, interesting place to have my office and studio space. When the business started out I worked from a home office, and my partner and I rotate between the home office and the one here, sometimes working together and sometimes apart. The benefits of working from the Broadway building is the personal, social space of the building itself and the sense that you are participating in a community. I have a lot of client meetings at the various independent coffee shops, and it is great to be able to take a break from solitary on-screen work to read a book or newspaper in a cafe.

*As a digital marketing company, lots of your clients are elsewhere, so you could work anywhere.*

Yes, but it comes down to choosing an environment that allows for a personal connection to my own history in the city. I've produced art work as part of a media residency at the artist run centre around the corner, I can check out exhibitions and other cultural events, and be a part of the community in the building. I notice that Hootsuite has moved to lower Main, and I can imagine that they are interested in the same sensibility in the neighbourhood.

*Are there things that your business could use in terms of space and facility needs?*

I'd like to see a cooperative model of co-location that would allow for sharing equipment and flexible space. I've followed the arc of a few 'hot desk' groups and I've been curious about whether they succeed or fail. I think a cooperative model could work well for sharing specialized colour and 3D printers, software licenses, and other equipment that most artists and designers may only need occasionally. If you were a member of the co-op, you would get a basic rate, and then additional time could be rented out to non-members. Studio XX in Montreal is a great model that is specific to women, and has a feminist approach to new media, which is really important given the gender bias in digital culture.

I also take part in a lot of educational opportunities across the spectrum - from the Creative Mornings events to business seminars to new media and social media workshops. It would be great to see education be a bigger part of the neighbourhood - for the creative community, but also for lower income residents, and people who are struggling.

*How about a centre where a flexible curriculum could be taught, based on need and interest?*

I'd like to improve my mechanical skills, for instance. Maybe involve some organizations like Hack Space that operate on free-cycling and repurposing obsolete technology. This would also be a positive way to teach, which I haven't done in a few years. There are huge opportunities for collaborative teaching - for instance one colleague is skilled in coding for app development but doesn't have design skills.

*What threats do you perceive as the neighbourhood 'improves'?*

Whatever development takes place has to address the broad economic diversity in Mount Pleasant. Kingsgate is the place where everybody mingles since we all need the basic services - the post office, drug store, liquor store, and the shoe store and grocery store. I'm concerned about what values more affluent condo-buyers might bring. I'm concerned when the neighbourhood is presented as something we consume as opposed to something we all produce.

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Deanne Achong is the principal of Dia Media, Web Strategy & Design. She is also an artist, currently collaborating with Faith Moosang on The Lulu Sweet, a public art video installation installed at the Richmond Olympic Oval and an iPhone app, Lulu Sweet: A Gold Rush Tale, a walking tour on the Fraser River. Her blog The Obsolescence Project was a daily year long photo blog exploring obsolescence, phase II coming soon.

*Interview by Lorna Brown, for Other Sights*

## **PHILLIP DJWA AGENTIC COMMUNICATIONS**

*Agentic Communications is located in Vancouver, but has a world wide client base including many non-profits or NGO's. What is the ratio of your non-profit business?*

Non profits or NGOs make up roughly 90% of our clients: everything from Yale University's Institution for Social and Policy Studies to the Ocean Keepers concept for the David Suzuki Foundation. Earlier on, our clients were mostly Vancouver-based, but that is changing: now local clients are about 40%.

*You could be located anywhere, so why Vancouver?*

The business was built in such a way as to support a lifestyle - and this loca-

tion still has what we need to keep work and family life somewhat in balance, although this past weekend was not a great example. Flexibility is a big part of the business model, since we operate across pretty much every time zone. We have contractors in eastern Europe, Asia, and could be working 24hrs a day. But when we're not working it's important to have a neighbourhood and stable sense of community. I think the cultural infrastructure is key to this.

*What challenges do you face, as far as the global nature of the business?*

I travelled to India recently and there are entire cities that are based on IT. The basis of the economy is IT training, which directly feeds IT professional service businesses. There is a skilled, cheaper global labour force that is already hungry and competing for business. So, our challenge is: what sets us apart? I think it comes down to a creative flexibility. For instance, conventional 'job descriptions' and 'job titles' don't capture the range and flexibility of the skills of the people we employ. One of our web developers is a musician and she brings all those talents and skills to her development and design work, like the ability to collaborate and think projects through different media.

So, as far as living here goes, what kinds of infrastructure does she need to keep this creativity and flexibility going? Rehearsal space, coffee shops, work spaces that have collaboration built in. Opportunities to collaborate and access to people making different kinds of things - paintings, drawings, installations, music - that's really important to our work force.

*What comes to mind when you think of Mount Pleasant - especially the hub at Broadway and Kingsway?*

Honestly, Mount Pleasant had a negative association for me growing up. It seemed like such a featureless zone. But now development is on a runaway kind of pace. The cultural infrastructure is really important - the three anchors of Grunt Gallery, the Western Front and VIVO have always been reasons to go there: but I hear that VIVO will have to relocate since their building has sold. The Filipino bakery on Broadway has always been a favourite destination, and a colleague recently showed some drawings at Kafka - coffee shops like Gene, Our Town - these are an important part of what makes the neighbourhood. Pulpfiction, restaurants like Seb's, the little bar called The Narrow: businesses like these contribute to the comfortable, community-minded atmosphere.

*Do you have any ideas or thoughts about what we think will be the next major development on the Kingsgate Mall site?*

It's hard to wrap your head around the economies of a big development. Density is bound to increase since it's a transit hub as well. It's important to keep the cultural and economic diversity that defines the neighbourhood. I'm assuming,

given the way things are going, there will be retail and housing.

I guess, to take it back to the idea of cultural infrastructure and business needing one another, what about rethinking the idea of usual retail footprints? Maybe small scale, or short term retail opportunities would work better than expensive larger storefronts that end up empty. That would make it more accessible to independents, and avoid the situation where global chains displace local enterprises. There's interesting things happening in collaborative consumption, in second-hand retail, in hybrids of for-profit and non-profit, and they need space to operate. There's also the opportunity of collaborative production - hive offices and shared facilities have the opportunity for collaborative relationships and skill-sharing built in. There's also large employers in close proximity, like the hospital on Kingsway, the credit union at Main and Terminal and it's really close to downtown. When it comes to the housing end of things, could we consider the housing needs of the local labour force? Are there alternative housing models such as co-ops that would work financially as well as socially?

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*Interview by Lorna Brown, for Other Sights*

## **JORDAN NOBLES**

*What is your relationship to site-specific practices?*

I am inspired by the architecture of certain spaces to create music, and in creating a concert hall from public space. I am inspired to fill spaces with music, by placing musicians in different spaces and surrounding the audience.

i am inspired by a sonic interaction with architecture rather than the public itself, and want to hear with music bouncing off the walls in space. Of course it's easier to work in a theatre, but I continue to be inspired by space itself, and grand atriums, and high ceilings. And turning what people do not notice into a place for beautiful music.

*Can you talk about how sound changes a space?*

You can close your eyes and tell where you are. Are you in a bathroom or a cathedral? It is as much as sense of your awareness as sight is. It tells you where you are. If you blindfold someone, you could tell where you are— there is temperature, humidity, ambient noise, etc. Like right now it's really obvious we are at a coffee shop next to a road.

Generally I welcome the sound of the building, but not the ambiance. Sometimes the ambient sound can be an incredible enhancement— but I don't compose with it in mind. I want to hear the building, not the air conditioning.

*Do you go to Kingsgate Mall? If so: what do you think about it? Is there anything that you think is “specific” about it? Do you think it reflects this neighbourhood?*

Never liked it. I have never thought about it architecturally; I always thought finding the Buy Low store was hard, even though it's so big. I couldn't find it for years, honestly. It's very strange. I think it's an eyesore, really. I hold it in very little regard. I want to put something nice in there.

*Have you ever “intervened” artistically in an unusual space like this?*

I've had my music played in malls. I once got a vhs tape in the mail that wasn't labelled, and it was a video recording of a piece of mine played in a food court— with musician surrounding the court.

*Was it a good application for the piece?*

It's actually the worst concert space I could actually think of. It's loud, it's clanky, it's messy and it is an awful place to be— but I bet music made it better that day.

*What is it that this kind of public space offers you as an artist? How does it feed your practice, and, by contrast, how does it feed audiences, in your opinion?*

I think when people walk into a place that was [because of a sonic intervention] made into a concert hall— even though it's a mall, or an art gallery or whatever— I think they start to see the world sonically differently. I think they think their city is a better place. You feel better about your city. You see art in the public library, and you feel better about where you live. For me personally, I don't know why I do what I do. I know what my outer motivations are: I want to make music here. but I don't know why. I can't really say what it does for me, but it makes me happy. It makes me proud of myself. I get the most pride from listening to a piece that fits a space perfectly— is experienced in the specific venue. What I do, you cannot do at home. A spatial concert has to happen in public space. It is an immersive experience. Recordings don't do the same thing. This is the 3d version of music. It is how we experience life; it is 360 degrees. I get to walk around and experience music as a moving being. I can wander away, check my email and come back— it fits to how we move through the world. Basically, I want concert halls everywhere.

*In a perfect world, with an infinite budget, what would you put here? Would you keep it the way it is? Would you change part, but not all? Would you demolish the whole thing?*

The Sonic/ Light Tower: as part of a commercial/ living space:

- all floors open to the atrium, and it is visible to to all floors;
- glass cube: like the 5th avenue apple store; glass as a structural component, where you could see floors receding, people on the floors above and below you.
- Reverberent; cathedral-like atrium. a private sanctuary; a garden on the inside.
- dome on top, with an oculus that spreads light all the way down the column. at the bottom, you could have a quiet, central sanctuary which is accessible and sonically connected to the central core. no seats— no intervening sound, but visible from the upper balconies.

This would make a building awesome. sonically. Most buildings suck. Architecturally, the only interesting thin [at Kingsgate] is the dome at Buy Low foods— which is not accessible to the public. When you are working at your shoe store, you should be able to go sit somewhere quiet on your lunch break and listen to something, or at least have a worthwhile sensory experience.

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Jordan Nobles is a composer and one of the principles for Redshift Music, a collective of musicians and composers known widely for their interventions in public spaces. Jordan is also the founder of Redshift Records, and composes for stage productions, orchestras and small ensembles. Recently Jordan's piece Simulacrum was nominated as 'Classical Composition of the Year' at the 2012 Western Canadian Music Awards and his piece Lux Antiqua has won the Sacra/Profana International Composition Competition, as well as been chosen from among numerous entries to be performed in Wrocław, Poland at the International Society for Contemporary Music's 2014 World Music Days.

*Interviewed on June 18th, 2013, by Vanessa Kwan, for OtherSights.*

## **GERMAINE KOH**

*What do you do?*

I would say I am an artist, who is concerned with public space and social interactions. And I am founder of League Project for playing invented games in sports. League actually started as a proposal for museums— that we might install a basketball court inside the museum, so that the functions of the space collide with the gallery uses. Playing with different languages and ways of moving in the space— and different ways of interacting.

*What is your relationship to site-specific practices?*

My work has often been site specific. I don't think I ever sought it out, but it has always been concerned with observing patterns of use. When I used to paint— I was trained as a painter— I was always concerned with conventions of communication, and eventually got interested in objects, and how objects were used differently in the everyday. It led me to start thinking of how practices are different in different locations and it was in many ways an organic development to considering specific sites. In my practice in general, there is an element of observation of a site, and an element in thinking of the common place and what that is in different arenas.

*Can you talk about how [art in public] changes a space?*

I've done anonymous small interventions, and temporary interventions, and a few permanent public art pieces. In the interventions and temporary works, the goal is never to make people think it's art, it's more to create an interesting situation. What is important is that it be surprising or thought provoking in some way. So I'm more interested in creating situations that generate curiosity or thought than a kind of vehicle of some kind of conceptual idea. Public art pieces— as in Winnipeg— are a kind of experiment. That work was trying to create a destination within the park for play, whereas the interventions rely on the element of surprise within an existing set of patterns of use. So in a sense, structurally that element of surprise is difficult to think about maintaining on a permanent scale. When I start thinking of permanence, the permanent pieces feel least like work of mine than other ones. I think it's because change and impermanence has been a significant principle for my work and it's been a bit harder to get my head around that as I think about permanent art works.

I wrestle with it all the time— how do you design something that will continue to be rewarding over time. Maybe it's less about surprise and more about a regular audience will start to have a growing relationship with it; the kind of knowledge that comes with knowing something over time, and the subtleties of its patterns. It's a different time scale— like when a short term relationship rolls over into a long term one.

*In your current project, League, part of the tag line is "Bring both body and mind". Is this— body and mind together— a motivation for your participatory works? Can this project be continued through architectural (or otherwise) intervention?*

Yes— in fact the concepts that I've come up with have had to do with at least with things being open to users actually reconfiguring space. Which is a step beyond being a passive audience. And could be quite rewarding for those who choose not to be.

*Do you go to Kingsgate Mall? If so: what do you think about it? Is there any-*

*thing that you think is "specific" about it? Do you think it reflects this neighbourhood?*

Kingsgate is a useful mall— all the basic services you need. Every business is not the high end version; it's the accessible version. It's the everyperson version. It's Buy Low, not Choices. This is my closest grocery store, that is my local drug store, my local liquor store. It really does provide a service to a big area. When it's gone, I don't really know what we might do for our grocery store needs. And when the library was there, it was kind of interesting too. It was the insertion of another different kind of cultural activity— it would be the same if there were a daycare in there, or a gym. as in: not based on commerce. Because for that mall, the way to make it a destination, you are not going to a lot of high end stores; it's about giving people a reason to stay there longer than just shopping. about shifting it to more of a living space rather than one of absolute practicality.

It's also a good scale— you can understand the shape and extent of it; metro town I can't go to, because I think I'm going to get lost, I can't find my car— whereas here, it's a human scale. The parking lots look like they are directed at different sub-neighbourhoods— they are each serving different people— I guess it's reflective of the crossroads aspect of it.

I wonder if there is a meeting place between the mall and the community centre. That's an interesting community centre (at main and 7th), there's a cafe, there's a soup kitchen once in a while, library, plus community centre. That mall could serve some of those same functions. I think it comes down to city agencies that run recreation programs are not going to pony up to be in malls when they can find space in community centres.

*Would it be interesting to merge the mall with a more community-centred mandate?*

You are talking about non-commercial agencies, so there would have to be subsidies. and a private gym is not a space that is open to everyone— so it's not quite the same.

*What kind of intervention/ installation/ production might you envision in a space like this?*

Maybe there is a way to program in the existing space: I can imagine a program of games in and around the mall. Creating challenges or invented games within the halls of kingsgate. It's not out of the realm to do that sort of intervention. The upper parking lot is big enough to have a roller rink— we could lay down a roller derby track and have an event there.

They are always looking for places to do outdoor promo events. or a temporary skate park. It would be amazing to bring skate ramps into the corridors. If you think about what a caricature of disaffected youth is— hanging out at the mall with their skateboards. What if the mall actually welcomed them in? And ball hockey. And since you have the parking lot lines, there is potential for making those the start of different kinds of playing fields. Soccer games where one goal is on this side of the mall, and the other on the far side— either the game flows around or through the mall. There's a welsh game, I think, where the entire community participates. It's about moving the ball from one side of the city to the other. It's like a medicine ball, and it becomes like an enormous scrum of people that are moving this ball around. It can go for hours and hours— the ball can get stuck for hours in one place. Oh— maybe that pits the developer against the creative community. Even though we're not on opposing teams— that's a false dichotomy. It is interesting is how people come out of their set roles when it comes to play. You can take people out of any group, and within each there are those who are cut-throat, the collaborators, the strategists— those kinds of professional distinctions break down when it comes to play.

And golf: there is a hole in each store, so the game moves through the mall. the thing is— these are existing sports, that people feel they need to have skill at. But it would also be great to create a situation where people are drawn into surprising game situations, within the existing operations of a mall. Like the golf idea— or a flag game. lower impact— so the operations need not be interrupted. But there is potential for people to get drawn into the activities.

*In a perfect world, with an infinite budget, what would you put here? Would you keep it the way it is? Would you change part, but not all? Would you demolish the whole thing?*

As this whole area gets denser, I think this area will feel a need for more open space. There are spaces, but they are not super accessible to other areas— the traffic patterns keep certain neighbourhoods quite separate. I think we'll need a plaza. This is a very densely used area. I feel like we could use more quiet space— an open space for gathering and spending time. and services. we need services too. Maybe a band shell.

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Germaine Koh is a Canadian visual artist based in Vancouver. Her conceptually-generated work is concerned with the significance of everyday actions, familiar objects and common places. Her exhibition history includes the BALTIC Centre (Newcastle), De Appel (Amsterdam), Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, Para/Site Art Space (Hong Kong), Frankfurter Kunstverein,

Bloomberg SPACE (London), The Power Plant (Toronto), Seoul Museum of Art, Artspace (Sydney), The British Museum (London), the Contemporary Art Gallery (Vancouver), Plug In ICA(Winnipeg), Art Gallery of Ontario (Toronto), and the Liverpool, Sydney and Montréal biennials. Koh was a recipient of the 2010 VIVA Award, and a finalist for the 2004 Sobey Art Award. Formerly an Assistant Curator of Contemporary Art at the National Gallery of Canada, she is also an independent curator and partner in the independent record label weewerk. Koh is represented by Catriona Jeffries Gallery, Vancouver.

*Interviewed on June 19th, 2013 by Vanessa Kwan, for OtherSights.*

