

group
SEARCH
[*art in the library*]

September 2006

JILLIAN PRITCHARD & DAN STARLING

MARINA ROY

KATHY SLADE

January 2007

ANTONIA HIRSCH

LAIWAN

MARK SOO

JILLIAN PRITCHARD & DAN STARLING *Twelve Subjects*

September 2006 to September 2007 at the landing on level 5

Displays, created by library staff and community groups, can be found throughout the many areas of the library, drawing attention to national days of remembrance, seasonal holidays, and topics of interest to library users, and highlighting different books and resources. Often found on the escalator landings, framed by the Copier room wall, these displays use familiar materials and presentation techniques to animate the space of the library.

Jillian Pritchard and Dan Starling are intrigued by these rotating displays, which might be seen as 'exhibitions from the collection'. The 'curator' of the display chooses works from the VPL holdings, and places them together with lettering, fabric, paper and other materials to lend an interpretation to the published works. Distinguished by their accessible, clear communication, and economy of means, the displays employ the language of art—colour, texture, shape and form—to catch the eye of the library patron.

The artists have replicated, within their studio, the red wall of the photocopier room and the surrounding area. Having constructed a set, they will create twelve displays of their own, and photograph them using a standard camera distance. The large-scale photographs are then installed on the red wall in the library, rotating monthly for one year. *Twelve Subjects* uses the language and materials of display-making to tackle subjects of concern to artists, such as accessibility and meaning, the relationship of form to content, and other issues artists face as they set out to communicate with an audience. Presenting a photograph of the display, rather than their display itself, introduces a critical distance from the objects and materials documented, frames the work as 'art', and provides a humorous take on the role of the artist in contemporary culture.

DAN STARLING & JILLIAN PRITCHARD are recent graduates of Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design. Their collaborative projects have focused on the book as an object and narrative in fiction, performance and video.

In *Heart of Darkness*, the artists re-typed the text of Conrad's novel, working word by word from the end to the beginning. This new version was then laid out on one side of each page and photocopied. In the photocopy process, each page



was removed before the carbon could be fixed on the paper. The unbound pages were then trimmed to fit a clamshell, foil-stamped hard cover. As this elegant work ages, the carbon shifts, imprint-

ing on the page opposite and gathering as a dark dust within its cover. The reader must disturb and eventually erase the text in order to consume it, their path traced in destruction, re-writing and blurring the meaning for the next reader, in an echo of the river journeys depicted in the text. *Heart of Darkness* was presented at the Helen Pitt Gallery, Vancouver, in 2004.

A Doll's House uses the convention of the published theatre script and also involves performance and video. The Ibsen play was re-printed with the dialogue excised, leaving only the stage directions and punctuation. The artists then staged a reading of the work in a turn of the century residence in Vancouver. The reading was videotaped through the windows of the residence, the actors' speech inaudible, leaving only the gestures of the speaking actors. An investigation of subtext (and a logical extension of Ibsen's intent), *A Doll's House* reflects upon the separating distance of history, and the desire to construct meaning. *A Doll's House* was presented at the Media Gallery at ECIAD in 2004.



Jillian Pritchard's solo work will be presented in October 2006 at Artspeak Gallery, Vancouver. Dan Starling's recent projects include *How to Write a Book Of*, an artist book, in collaboration with Rachelle Sawatsky, from Projectile Publishing.

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Shearer West

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Shearer West



Portraiture

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The King's Two Bodies: Saddam and his doubles

<http://marinaroy.ca/saddam.htm>

Anyone who watched the news coverage of the recent war in Iraq before Saddam went into hiding and was captured, heard about the suspicion that there was

VANCOUVER PUBLIC LIBRARY

The borrower is responsible for returning this book in good condition. Please examine before taking out and report any damage. Fines will be charged on items not returned by closing time on the date due.

MARINA ROY *Trappings*

September 2006 to March 2008 in the print collection

A library is one of the last refuges for the democratic potential of shared cultural consciousness and public interaction, a true public commons. Reading takes many forms here — at times it is a very directed, instrumental pursuit of particular forms of knowledge, at other times it is more intuitive, a mental wandering, where one book leads to the next, through footnotes and bibliographies, and through browsing in the stacks.

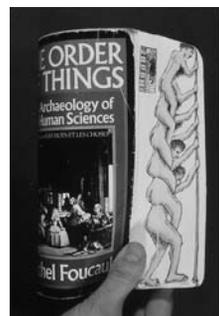
Trappings is a series of discreet interventions into the VPL print collection. They trace the research conducted by the artist for her writing, teaching, and art making. Roy researches and collects information for particular projects, such as one related to the letter X, and more recently, one related to the letter Q. More generally, her research interests include concepts such as nomadism, nature, portraiture and property.

In *Trappings*, Roy imagines a book as a temporary location where a nomadic researcher lingers, exploring how the slips of paper, small images and notes might find another reader of the same text at a different time. These subtle book interventions create new mental paths to follow, by inserting information related to the topic of the book, or by leading the reader to the other books in which she has intervened. These ephemeral messages, seemingly accidental, speak directly from one reader to another and add another voice or point of view to the published text. Thoughtfully produced, they engage the curiosity of fellow readers within the labyrinth of the collection, and may contradict or complicate the original author's intentions. Over the course of Group Search, *Trappings* maps the book collection with the path of her inquiry, and shares the many pleasures to be taken in her work.

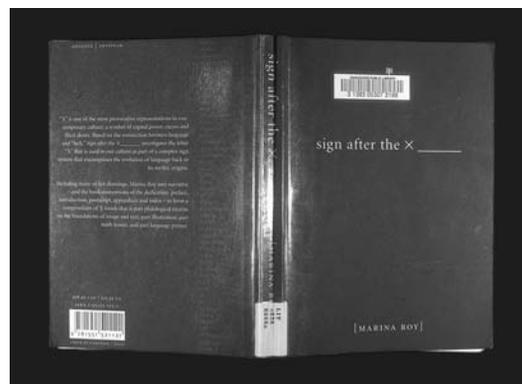
Roy documents her on-going process by noting the call number, title, and other classification data; the condition of the book, a description of what was left inside the book and/or a photograph of her intervention.

MARINA ROY works in drawing, painting and animation, prose and critical writing, as well as video projects in collaboration with Natasha McHardy and Abbas Akhavan.

A series of altered books, *Thumbsketches* sculpturally intervenes in familiar texts, evoking bodily memories of books as sensual and intimate objects. The artist has drawn on the cut ends of paperback editions of books such as Balzac's *Lost Illusions* and *The Complete Poems of Keats*. When pressed behind plexiglas mounts, the drawings stretch and splay in animated shifts of perspective. The work leans upon and skews our associations of revered texts with irreverent, humorous alterations, drawing upon the histories of illuminated manuscripts, comics, and illustration.



Her book, *Sign After the X* _____, investigates the letter that is used in our culture as part of a complex sign system that encompasses the evolution of language back to its mythic origins. Including references as diverse as Xanadu, the X-Men and Xenophanes, this compendium is delightful in its rigor and its accessibility. *Sign After the X* _____ will soon include an interactive website, in collaboration with David Clark and Graham Meisner



Marina Roy is Assistant Professor in the Department of Art History, Visual Art and Theory at the University of British Columbia. Her critical writing has been published in *Canadian Art*, *Prefix Photo* and *Public*, (Toronto), and in exhibition catalogues published by the Vancouver Art Gallery and Presentation House Gallery. Solo exhibitions of her visual art have been presented by Artspeak, Contemporary Art Gallery and OR Gallery (Vancouver), Struts Gallery (Sackville, NB), Eye Level Gallery and Anna Leonowens Gallery (Halifax) and Open Space Gallery (Victoria). Her work has been included in group exhibitions at Galerie AP-4, (Geneva), Viktor Bucher Projektraum, (Vienna) and Chisenhale Gallery, (London).

A few books to check out:

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KATHY SLADE *Fifty-two Weeks of Transactions* at the Lending Library

September 2006 to September 2007

Kathy Slade has undertaken a 52-week performance, beginning in September 2006, which will result in a unique bookwork. Once a week, on an appointed day and time, she will visit the Vancouver Public Library to choose and borrow a book. Each original transaction receipt, which clearly states the date, time and book title will be saved. Because the receipts are printed on thermal paper, they will slowly fade. At the end of the year, these documents from the performance will be assembled into an artist's book that will be donated to the Vancouver Public Library.

This project is at once simple and complex. It touches on numerous on-going themes in Slade's practice and responds to the contract of exchange between the borrowing individual and lending institution. A dossier of her movements once a week, for one year, *Fifty-two Weeks* is a self-portrait formed by the artist's selection of materials to consume. This ordinarily private transaction is presented for the speculation of the viewer — did she, in fact, read the books? Was her choice influenced through the knowledge that it would be made public? Is there significance in the sequence of her list, does it contain a secondary index beyond the chronological record? How might these borrowed books have influenced her thinking, her next choice, her actions? Are her choices correct, or trivial, or pointed?

Through inverting the terms of the lending policy, by disclosing what library procedures guard as private, *Fifty-two Weeks* draws attention to the routine and everyday negotiation of technological surveillance by individuals and by institutions. Encouraging our speculation as to her reading choices, Slade sets up an expectation that we might learn more about her by tracking her transactions. Her weekly visits, each indicating a new page, accumulate in a serial, predictable pattern of behaviour — the performed creation of a book.

KATHY SLADE draws upon a wide range of cultural practices — Hollywood film, Pop song music and lyrics, modernist abstraction and works of literature — in her diverse artistic practice.



Chart, 2006, is a grid of one hundred and five machine-embroidered 'samplers', depicting basic guitar tablature, the simple pictorial representations of guitar chords that make pop song notation accessible to all players. An obsessive archive containing all the chords necessary for a song chart, this work weaves together references to a number of sources. Written language is drawn in, through the alphabetic letters used to designate the chords; the body surfaces in the circles representing fingertips upon the strings and frets, represented as lines. Machine embroidery, which hovers between hand-made domestic craft and the digitally mechanized piecework factory, is traced to the history of women's labour. Text and textile share an etymological ancestry in the Latin *texere*: to weave, returning us to language.

In *Ordinary World*, Slade 'samples' the six pages of sheet music for Duran Duran's 1993 comeback hit of the same name. The sheet music gives an extended instruction on how to make a song — how to use your voice and what to do with your hands — in addition to the musical notation. As a pop culture self-portrait rendered in embroidered 'pages', *Ordinary World* explores the consumer identity that can be forged through the mimicry of performance.



Kathy Slade has recently exhibited her work at Tracey Lawrence Gallery, the OR Gallery and the Western Front (Vancouver), White Columns (New York), Neon Gallery (Brösarp, Sweden) and Liu Haisu Art Museum (Shanghai). Her critical writing has been published in *C International Magazine*, and by Artspeak and Charles H. Scott Gallery (Vancouver). Published art projects include *Heartways: The Exploits of Genny O*, published by the Whitney Museum of American Art, Printed Matter (New York) and Arsenal Advance (Vancouver). Slade manages READ Books at Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design, and is an editor of ECI Press.

group SEARCH

[art in the library]



Vancouver Public Library

Central Branch, 350 West Georgia Street, Vancouver, BC



CITY OF VANCOUVER

Public Art Program

Other Sights for Artists' Projects Association

Group Search is a collaboration between the Vancouver Public Library Central Branch, the City of Vancouver Public Art Program, and Other Sights for Artists' Projects Association. We wish to thank the following supporters for their invaluable contribution to the production and presentation of the series:



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In June 2005, the *Inside the Library: Curatorial Initiatives* program was developed to create, along with the *Aperture* program, a continuous series of public art projects in the Central Branch from 2005 to 2010. Representing unparalleled access for audiences to experience contemporary art, the Curatorial Initiatives program will present artworks that are researched, developed and realized in the spaces and systems of the Central Branch. The *Inside the Library* programs provide an opportunity to artists interested in addressing this very culturally diverse, social and public space while at the same time investigating the broader philosophical, symbolic and associative meanings of 'the library'.

The first Curatorial Initiative program, *Group Search: art in the library*, begins in September 2006 with three projects by Jillian Pritchard & Dan Starling, Marina Roy and Kathy Slade. In January 2007, projects by Antonia Hirsch, Laiwan, and Mark Soo will be launched.

Group Search considers our use of the library in many ways. Library visitors are looking for something—we enter a system in order to find it, and welcome surprising discoveries within our often-solitary search. We are active, inquisitive viewers in a visually complex environment that includes the architecture, the systems of categorization, the stacks and the furniture, the machines and signage, the escalators and glass, and the movement of people within. The artists in *Group Search* use artistic strategies of interruption and integration, embedding artwork in or through the systems of the library, diverting an accustomed search pattern and giving pause. Their work infiltrates the collections, the electronic catalogues, and the reading and gathering areas as it examines the library as a site for contemplative work, a system of organization, and a symbol of democracy.

These temporary works are produced by artists whose curiosity, research methods and formal approaches relate to the contemplative and active spaces of the library, to the containment and exchange of information found there, and to the activities of searching and locating, borrowing, reflecting and returning that library users undertake. Diverse in age, cultural background and in the media they use, these artists have been invited to develop work to be strategically sited within certain appropriate zones of the library. Whether they work with texts, or create installations or performances, the artists have a fascination with languages and organizational systems, and popular and specialized culture in all its forms. They pose important questions about how meaning is made, and what counts as knowledge in contemporary society.

— Lorna Brown, *Group Search* Curator