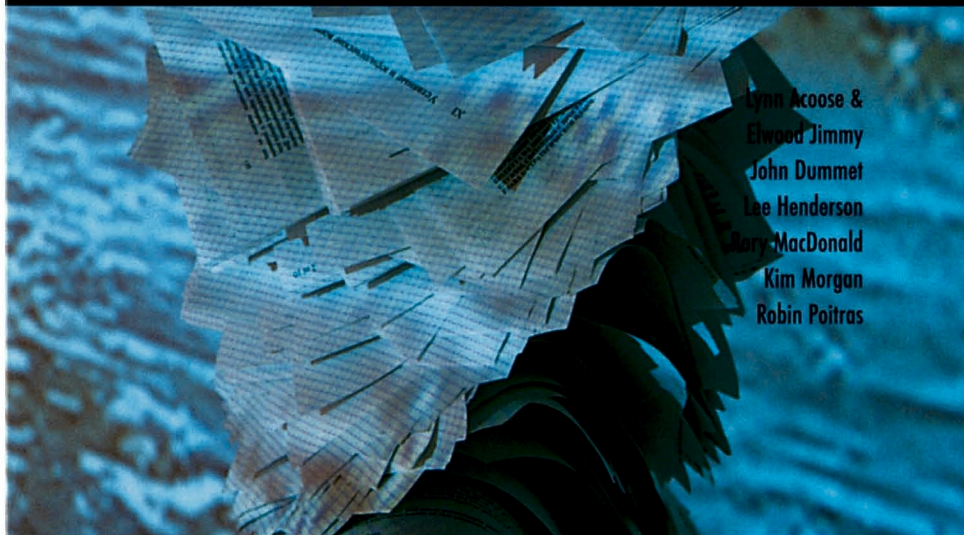




resisting arrest: seeking sustainability



Lynn Acoose &
Elwood Jimmy
John Dummet
Lee Henderson
Rory MacDonald
Kim Morgan
Robin Poitras



Kim Morgan, *Mobile Perspective. A vehicle for (in)digestion*, 2005. Installation with video component

Resisting Arrest: Seeking Sustainability

sustain/ v & n, v.tr.

1 provide with the basic necessities required to support or preserve life, livelihood, or existence; provide for the needs of (*water is required to sustain these trees; this industry sustains over 14,000 workers*). **2** endure, stand; bear up against. **3** undergo or suffer (defeat or injury etc.) (*she sustained a separated left shoulder*). **4** maintain or keep (an action or process) going continuously (*can she possibly sustain such an effort?*). **5** (of a court etc.) uphold or decide in favour of (an objection etc.). **6** give strength to; encourage, support. **7** substantiate, or corroborate (a statement or charge). **8** hold up or support the weight of, esp. for a long period (*that ice is not thick enough to sustain your weight*) . . .

sustainable/ adj.

1 Ecology (esp. of development) which conserves an ecological balance by avoiding depletion of natural resources (*sustainable agriculture; sustainable forestry*). **2** that can be maintained, especially at a particular level (*sustainable income*) **sustainably** adv. **sustainability**. n. ¹

In *Resisting Arrest: Seeking Sustainability* we present works by six Saskatchewan-based artists and a guest artist from England who share important characteristics: each is mindful of the past, conscious of present conditions, and concerned about the future. Interventionist, performative, and participatory, their works engage with environmental, economic and social issues, addressing the future of this locale by exploring the unavoidable imbrication of its sustainability concerns.

The concerns addressed by these artists include: the dissolution of public space in globalized corporate capitalism and strategies for the democratization of civic sites; aboriginal treaty negotiations and land claims, and related health and well-being concerns -- for aboriginal peoples and others; renewable resource management -- of water, land, mineral, wildlife, fisheries and forestry resources; the precarious state of the livestock industry and its limited options since the onset of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy and Avian Influenza; and, as a consequence of urban development patterns and the value we place on individual and collective mobility, business and society's ever increasing dependence on automotive technologies and fossil fuels. Iterating such concerns, the works in this exhibition -- by visiting artist John Dummet, collaborating artists Lynne Acoose and Elwood Jimmy (from the Yorkton area), and Lee Henderson, Rory MacDonald, Kim Morgan, and Robin Poitras (who hail from Regina) -- make reference to specific local conditions. Yet these works would also generate meaning and speak to viewers in other locations. Conditions and concerns here are specific but, in an era of globalization, they are not entirely different from those found elsewhere.

Why present an exhibition on the topic of sustainability now, during Saskatchewan's centennial year? The idea of sustainable development is still fairly new and not always well understood. The exhibition, its adjunct activities, and this publication aim to draw attention to the idea of sustainable development, to introduce and illuminate the concept as a way



Lynn Acoose and Elwood Jimmy, *Exempt*, 2004, video installation

to mark the one hundredth anniversary of the establishment of the province of Saskatchewan, and to contribute thereby to its future possibilities.

Sustainable development planning looks to sustainability studies, studies which attempt to foresee possibilities for the future. Such studies aim to identify and understand a spectrum of interrelated sustainability factors. Thus, they address more than one area of concern or activity. Indeed, serious sustainability discussions will be careful to acknowledge the interconnectedness of the varied factors that determine environmental, economic, social and cultural conditions in a locale. Like the idea of sustainable development, the field of sustainable development planning is young. Planners and legislators only recently have begun to acknowledge sustainability concerns. The complexity of such concerns often makes them difficult to communicate, unwieldy to present and represent, and thus unattractive as topics for public debate. Moreover, possible strategies for addressing sustainability issues often run contrary to the concerns of, or are not of interest to, those with political and business objectives. For instance, while the Dow Jones recently began offering a special index for corporate sustainability it offers no such indices for community or environmental sustainability. *Resisting Arrest: Seeking Sustainability* asks: What are such indices? Who in this locale is attending to local social, cultural, environmental and economic sustainability indices? Who, among Saskatchewan and Regina's citizens, leaders, politicians, business owners and social activists, is generating strategies for sustainable development? Is City Hall developing a plan for municipal sustainability? Does the province have a

sustainability plan? If so, what do these plans entail? What problems do we need to address to ensure community and regional sustainability? After a century of frontier capitalist 'progress' can this place continue to develop as it has in the past? The artists participating in *Resisting Arrest: Seeking Sustainability* pose such questions. And they suggest some actions.

The exhibition's title invokes and invites resistance -- to apathy, entropy, stasis. It also points to the social role and potential dynamism of art, which often challenges conventional thinking and the status quo, sometimes simply by endeavouring analysis and discussion. Presenting works within the gallery and beyond its confines, *Resisting Arrest* aims to heighten awareness about sustainability concerns and, concurrently, situate those concerns in the larger context, taking into account global forces, a prevailing anthropocentric and mechanistic view of nature, and a powerful corporate culture that shapes our daily lives, the world we inhabit, and our perceptions of it.

John Dummet, the sole visiting artist participating in *Resisting Arrest: Seeking Sustainability*, addresses social sustainability concerns by investigating the role and nature of community and civic pride. His performance/installation work for the exhibition involves a bunting decorated mobile kiosk that takes shape and evolves over the course of a two-week residency in Regina, during which he accommodates incidental contributors to the work. Situating the kiosk in various public sites, including Victoria Park and the Central Regina Public Library foyer, when engaged by passers-by Dummet invites





Lee Henderson, *Collapse and Replication*, 2005, interactive installation (earthenware)

their comments -- on his presence, on the presence of the kiosk, on citizenship, community and the City of Regina. He records the offered comments and integrates them into the kiosk, transcribing them onto the bunting material's brightly coloured plastic chevrons. Both in the performative mode and as an installation work within the exhibition site, Dummet's *we are all here* (2005) calls attention to the disappearance of public space, the social and economic tensions between private and public space, and the changing meaning of civic space. With the introduction of a 'temporary public building' Dummet gently intervenes in and reactivates the cityscape. His gathering and recording of 'public scripts' gradually transforms the kiosk into a reference point, a visual index in which we can read the relationship between urban conditions and cultural values.

Lynn Acoose and Elwood Jimmy's installation work *Exempt* (2004) is concerned with the growth and sustainability of Aboriginal cultures in Saskatchewan. A moving image of a lively, rushing stream or river is projected on a gallery wall and accompanied by the sound of running water. The image is foregrounded and bisected by a six-foot high pile of paper documents impaled on an iron spike -- a monumentalized version of an office desk memo spike. The spiked papers represent treaty documents pertaining to Aboriginal peoples, their territories and cultures. They evoke the accumulated insults and damages contained in or enacted by such documents. *Exempt* thus draws attention to the 'treaty agreement' -- as an instrumental device in the production of private property and property rights that favour colonial interests, as a mechanism that effects Aboriginal

disenfranchisement, and as a political tool that imposes debilitating social and economic structures while claiming possession and control of natural resources. While giving voice to Aboriginal efforts to address treaty injustices, realize self-government and resolve outstanding land claims, *Exempt* simultaneously points to the dominant culture's propensity to squander precious resources. *Exempt* venerates place. And, it makes a land claim.

Looking specifically at grain and beef production, Lee Henderson's work for *Resisting Arrest* questions the ethics and efficacy of current agribusiness practices, such as the manufacturing of feed products that turn herbivores into carnivores. His *Collapse and Replication* (2005) refers to such practices and to the economic and social difficulties faced by ranchers and ranching communities in the aftermath of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy, also known as Mad Cow Disease. It involves a slightly raised tin-covered platform surrounded by thick, slightly opaque plastic sheeting: a miniature abattoir. Within the curtained area stacks of miniature stylized cows cast in compacted indigenous mud and soil await the viewer's attention. Children are especially drawn to the site. They are quick to apprehend the invitation to play with the toy-like miniatures. The artist provides a small stack of cows demonstrating the possibilities. But the mud cows are imperfectly formed. When stacked they eventually tumble.

The collapsing stacks and the debris that mounts are metaphors for the collapse of other sorts of systems and structures on which we habitually depend. Henderson invites our involvement in the process of collapse, thereby also

inviting speculation about alternative and perhaps more stable structures, and more useful and sustainable endeavours. By implication, this work additionally questions the ethics and the sustainability of cloning, genetic manipulation and other unnatural forms of biological replication. With its focus on the compromised status of the beef industry, *Collapse and Replication* also connects the commercial consumption of beef and other meat products to the degraded conditions of industrial livestock. Using the cow as an icon of place -- and thus making an homage to senior artist Joe Fafard whose bronze cows decorate several sites of civic pride in the Canadian prairies -- Henderson's work refers to local sustainability issues, but it just as effectively invokes global health and disease control concerns as well.

Kim Morgan's installation *Mobile Perspectives. A vehicle for (in)digestion* (2005) reflects on consumer culture and especially on the implications of our reliance on automobiles and the petroleum industry. Morgan notes that the Saskatchewan landscape or cityscape is perhaps most often viewed, and experienced, from within a moving vehicle. This observation might also be made elsewhere. With four digital video projectors positioned within the empty skeleton of a

junked car, *Mobile Perspectives -- A vehicle for (in)digestion* mounts a continuous display of moving image projections on the car's four glass surfaces: its front windshield, two side windows and back window are the screens for video documentation of the streets and the environs of Regina, scenes that include the Ipsco steel salvaging site and many miles of shopping malls, car lots and big box stores. Inverting the normal viewing position, and reinvesting meaning into a salvaged automobile, the work aptly demonstrates our remove from nature and how our dependence on automobiles affects our understanding and experience of the city and the land. Morgan's concern about how our relation to place is further mediated by images of nature made for our visual consumption is evident in her insistence on looking at the "terminal landscape"⁷ as a far too common backdrop for human activity.

Part of a larger series entitled *Public Works*, Rory MacDonald's *Curb Works* (2005) consists of six individually cast blue and white ceramic inlays inserted into cracks and cavities in the crumbling sidewalk curbs surrounding the Sherwood Village Branch Library and its Dunlop Art Gallery site. MacDonald's *Curb Works* intervene in these public locations to create





Internationally acclaimed for her sometimes challenging and always lyrical and poetic collaborative multi-disciplinary performance works, works that often respond to events and conditions in Saskatchewan, Robin Poitras' *Les femmes fontenelles* (2005) was conceived and realized for *Resisting Arrest: Seeking Sustainability*. It is comprised of a

[illegible]



Rory Macdonald, *Curb Works*, 2005,
installation/intervention

The mismanagement of water quality, air quality, and other precious resources in this region, and elsewhere, has been exacerbated by the effects of 'natural disasters' — such as drought — the causes of which we can now trace, at least in part, to human activities. Such environmental challenges are globally ubiquitous and urgent today. They are symptomatic of a set of human activities that might be called globalized terminal economics — terminal because such economic systems depend on finite supplies of non-renewable natural resources. And, because they cause irreversible harm to plant and animal species, ecological systems, social groups and cultures. Yet the dyad of depletion and consumption that characterizes terminal economics is everywhere so normalized that we barely notice its effects. In addition to our passive acceptance of such economic activity, locally our insouciance seems to extend as well to neglect of our human resources. Saskatchewan's economic and environmental problems are conjoined with social and cultural concerns. For example, the attraction of more amenable living conditions elsewhere effects a 'brain drain' whereby the young, the brightest, the best of the populace leave the province, depriving it of important human resources.

What we know about biological ecosystems can inform what we need to know about sustaining economic, social and cultural ecologies. We know that frogs, for instance, are excellent barometers of their habitat conditions and the potential sustainability of other species. Their wetland habitats are delicate ecosystems in which changes may not be readily apparent — except in their effects on those species dedicated to the site, such as frogs, which quickly reflect even minute

changes in their habitat. Artists are also good barometers of change. Because they are often marginalized in one way or another they are sensitive to changing economic and political conditions, which they reflect and respond to in their work, even when such changes are momentarily imperceptible to others. And, the presence of an urban artists' enclave in a derelict area is often the beginning of a revitalization process.

The remarkable artistic endeavours evident in the *Resisting Arrest: Seeking Sustainability* exhibition will, we hope, encourage discussion about sustainable development in Saskatchewan. Such discussion will, we hope, enhance awareness about the connections between human activities and the state of the environment.

Felipe Diaz and Annette Hurlig
October 2005

1. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, 9th ed., s.v. "sustain" and "sustainable."
2. Scott Watson, "Terminal City: Place, Culture, and the Regional Inflection," in *Vancouver: Art and Artists 1931-1983*, (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 1983).

List of Works

Lynn Acoose and Elwood Jimmy
2004
Exempt
video installation

John Dummet
2005
we are all here
community based installation project

Lee Henderson
2005
Collapse and Replication
interactive installation (earthenware)

Rory MacDonald
2005
Curb Works
installation / intervention

Kim Morgan
2005
Mobile Perspective: A vehicle for (in)digestion
installation with video component

Robin Poiras
2005
Les femmes fountenelles
performance and installation

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Cover image: Detail of Lynn Acoose and Elwood Jimmy's *Exempt*, 2004, video installation

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