

SYPHON

Huffing that gasoline, making that scene —
featuring **LIDS, SU SHEEDY, CHEYANNE
TURIONS**, with a centerfold artist project
by **CHRISTINE DEWANCKER**.

syphon honours the etymology of the term "boser," referring to those farmers who, on the Canadian prairies during the great depression of the 1930s, would syphon gas from their neighbours' vehicles with a hose. We reclaim the somewhat derogatory expression and apply it to all those trying to make ends meet in artist-run culture.



CREDIT FOR COVER

'Right of Passage'

ARTIST: DORENE INGLIS

PHOTO CREDIT: WILLIAM WEEDMARK

CREDIT FOR CENTERFOLD

CHRISTINE DEWANCKER is a multidisciplinary artist working in sculpture, installation and new media. She graduated from Queen's University with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in 2011. She was a collective member of the Artel Arts Accommodation and Venue Inc. as well as a board member at Modern Fuel and the Union Gallery. She has been involved with a number of civic projects in Kingston and enjoyed working in the city. Christine has just recently moved to Montreal.

CAPTION AND CREDIT FOR PAGE 2

The first 6 tenants of the Artel: Stefan Duerst, Matt Kicul, Jessica Rovito, Lisa Visser, Rebecca Soudant, Irina Skvortsova. Photo courtesy **THE ARTEL**.

MASTHEAD

SYPHON is an arts and culture publication produced by Modern Fuel Artist-Run Centre that is meant to act as a conduit between the arts community in Kingston and communities elsewhere. It was created in response to the lack of critical arts commentary and coverage in local publications, and seen as a way to increase exposure to experimental and non-commercial art practices. Syphon has a mandate to feature local arts coverage in conjunction with national and international projects, and an emphasis on arts scenes and activities that are seen as peripheral. It acts, in essence, as a record and communiqué for small regional arts communities throughout the country.

MODERN FUEL ARTIST-RUN CENTRE is a non-profit organization facilitating the production, presentation, and interpretation of contemporary visual, time-based and interdisciplinary arts. Modern Fuel aims to meet the professional development needs of emerging and mid-career local, national and international artists, from diverse cultural communities, through exhibition, discussion, and mentorship opportunities. Modern Fuel supports innovation and experimentation, and is committed to the education of interested publics and the diversification of its audiences.

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

Kevin Rodgers on Administration & Experimentation

*Two hundred yellow helium balloons crowd the ceiling. One peels away, and has started floating to the rooms upstairs. Someone performs for the first time ever, an experimental cello piece with a slideshow of screen grabs from her google search history. An Artel member is tossing balloons at the drummer of a band, who is singing karaoke to a song by another band. Another person is performing a fake orgasm upstairs and it is being broadcast with feedback into the kitchen. A performance artist does a puppet show. There is a piece with loop pedals and rainbows. Everyone leaves with a necklace made out of a tape cassette**

Upon arriving in Kingston in December 2012, I began to familiarize myself with a city I had only visited once before. Now a resident, I sought out places of interest: places that I would enjoy wandering into for conversation and drinks, sights and sounds. One of the first places I was drawn to was the Artel, a unique arts complex I was aware of by its association with Modern Fuel. At a basic level, I knew the Artel had emerged with the support of Modern Fuel, and members and staff of Modern Fuel had a hand in its founding in May 2006.

Throughout the early months of 2013, I attended a symposium (Symp-whoa-sium), art openings and saw some pretty fantastic music shows. There was something always happening at the Artel (it helped that it was also on my way home and I could just drop in and see what was going on). Despite its crusty appearance—some tattered couches, a rather chaotic kitchen and a certain level of grime—I felt comfortable, and was convinced that something worthwhile was taking place.

The Artel strives to be a safe space that is free of oppression of all kinds for artists, performers and audience members alike. Because the Artel is about building community, freedom of expression and respecting diversity, we are proud to use our venue to host a variety of artists whilst respecting every individual performing, attending, or otherwise involved in our public events. In addition, we encourage that all events provide a pay-what-you-can admission option to discourage discrimination based on social class, and to further foster the community through the arts.

It was through discussions in November 2005 between then program director of Modern Fuel Gjen Snider and Matt Abramsky, son of Keystone Properties Management Inc.'s president Jay Abramsky, that the idea of a live/work space emerged: a new "ArtsRes." "We were looking for ways to entice the wealth of young artists coming out of the Queen's Bachelor of Fine Arts program to stay in Kingston," Snider said in an interview from 2006, "At the same time Keystone approached us about creating some opportunities for artists and driving the art scene in the downtown. The Artel was born out of that vision."

Snider has provided me with a wealth of information on the Artel's formation and early events. Acting as the catalyst for the creation of a new and flexible art space, Snider brought together (after much community discussion) a key group of individuals, including among many others, Vincent Perez, Lenny Epstein, Jessica Rovito, Lisa Visser, Melinda Richka and Irina Skvortsova. The first meeting of the new collective occurred on Feb. 17, 2006, and the Artel opened in mid-May with a community BBQ and an exhibition of artwork by the first residents. A concert followed a few days later with PS I Love You, Backyard Sex Band and Sax Laden.

Since then, and supported by an evolving cast of creative people ("predominantly young, under 30, transient, energetic and unattached"), the Artel has effectively brought a dizzying range of cultural activities to 205 Sydenham Street: film and poetry nights to life drawing, installations and music performances. After six years, there is a steadiness to the organization, but one that has within its structure a place for change: the result is a dynamic tension between "administration and experimentation."

The Artel has six tenants who live in the rooms above the gallery, and share their kitchen and living room with the public on a regular basis. All the tenants are members of the collective, and make decisions with the other members at weekly meetings. Obviously, for a space like the Artel, being a tenant means more than paying rent. Everyone contributes to the collective in some way, and all understand and endeavour to uphold what it is to be a safe space here. All decisions are reached by employing consensus amongst the collective members, including those not living in the space.

Acting as an incorporated collective, the Artel operates within guidelines and policies. "At times there are 'invisible' people working at/for the Artel to keep the place going from the administrative point of view," Irina Skvortsova explains, "and other times they play more visible dominant roles." As is often the case, this past summer one group of incredibly

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE CONTINUED

talented people moved on from the Artel (to other cities, or to grad school). In its stead emerged a new formation of spirited individuals. The list of activities remains strong: book launches and a comedy night (!), exhibitions, concerts and recently SPEAK HER OUT: A Spoken Word Showcase by Women of Color.

"There must be a way to acknowledge the value of spaces driven not by capital," writer and arts organizer Sue Bell Yank notes, "but by other equally important forces—of art, of ideas, of a deeper understanding of the world and ourselves."¹ On account of its capacity to simultaneously evolve and remain firm to its core principles, I am using the Artel as the point from which to gather this series of articles and projects on precarity, collective gesture, and "community" that make up this issue of Syphon. Simply stated, the Artel is an example of action and initiative (not without its controversies). It is a multi-faceted space, driven by an overwhelming desire to produce meaningful relationships between ourselves and others.

Complementing Modern Fuel's fall thematic on Community Aesthetics, this issue includes an interview with artist Su Sheedy on the popular Shoreline Shuffle event in Kingston; a collage by former Artel Collective member Christine Dewancker; a transcript of curator cheyanne turions' recent presentation at the Evolve or Perish media arts symposium in Ottawa (Nov 14-17, 2013); and lastly a project by LIDS ("Ladies Invitational Deadbeat Society"), whose slogan "Do More With More, Do Less With Less," was "inspired by a discussion about how non-profit arts organizations negotiate the increasing pressure to participate in business-based models and the 'cultural industry.'"

As artists and cultural producers, it is crucial that we reflect on the value of our work—and that includes shifting our metrics of measurement, as well as examining notions of productivity that cannot be completely economized. How these debates take place, and their placement within a local context is paramount. I hope that this new issue of Syphon (and future issues) extends our contribution to larger discussions on value and exchange already taking place (see the link to LIDS' The Value of Our (Collective) Work).

I WOULD LIKE TO THANK Gjen Snider, Irina Skvortsova, and Nicole Burisch for their eager conversation and answers to various inquiries. I would also especially like to thank our generous contributors to this issue of Syphon: cheyanne turions, Su Sheedy, LIDS and Christine Dewancker. As many of you know, due to budget restrictions, Syphon currently cannot offer payment for contributions. This too, needs to be part of the discussion.

*The text in italics are contributions to Syphon by the current Artel collective at the request of the author.

¹ <http://www.kcet.org/arts/artbound/counties/los-angeles/concord-art-space-cypress-park.html>. Yank's article describes the Concord Art Space, another live/work/gallery centre in Los Angeles that closed its doors on Oct 25, 2013.

KEVIN RODGERS is an artist and currently the Artistic Director of Modern Fuel.

DEBRIEFING

Su Sheedy: Dear Kingston...

The Shoreline Shuffle was a one-day public protest on June 23rd, 2013 created by David McDonald and other organizers of the Water Access Group, including Mary Farrar, Su Sheedy, Lea Westlake and Irina Skvortsova. The intention of the day was to ask the public to walk, bike, or boat the 7.8km shoreline from Douglas Fluhrer Park to Lake Ontario Park in one massive movement and in doing so, observe and acquaint oneself with the good, the bad and the possibilities for future change. The main goal ultimately was to pressure the City of Kingston for a long-term integrated waterfront plan with public input.

Curated by Su Sheedy, *Dear Kingston...* was an accompanying outdoor art exhibition made up of 16 word installations that spanned the 7.8km shoreline along the Shoreline Shuffle route.

KEVIN RODGERS: How long have you been involved in the water access group?

SU SHEEDY: I have been involved over the last few years, starting with the 'Mass Swim' of June 2012. It was at that time that David McDonald and Alec Ross built a website with the official Water Access Group title. I began communicating with David when I was putting together an art exhibit earlier in the year on the theme of water, and decided to host a Public Forum within the space. David McDonald agreed to speak about local water issues, specifically Kingston's waterfront, and the issue of Public vs. Privately owned land.

What was the impetus to do a large curated project like Dear Kingston...?

I think the interest for me lies in the fact that this initiative was nonpartisan: it was about engaging the public in a very broad sense. Rallying people together, asking them to tune in, ponder, and observe interesting art along the waterline is a very fun, and meaningful thing to do.

How did you go about selecting the artists and the specific sites their work would be in?

I am particularly happy with the way in which the selection process evolved. Since we had been organizing this event for 8 or 9 months, time was on my side. I could hang back and observe my community or listen with a different ear. It was my favorite part of the process, observing my city with new eyes and ears. Given this grace period, I found that artists more or less revealed themselves to me.

For example, Joan Sharpe had posted on the McBurney Park Facebook wall a call out for anyone interested in joining her at the Skelton Park Music festival for 'International Knitting in Public day'. I thought, "what a creative and texturally tuned in woman"! This would be a person interested in my project, and she was.

Did the artists have a decision in which site their works were placed?

Absolutely. I thought it was a key factor to the success of the show. Each artist was asked to acquaint with the shoreline independently and to choose a site which was in need of something, or which was asking or begging for attention.

I felt it important that the artist engage with their site on a personal level.

Dear Kingston... was site-specific, and the sculpture had to be a WORD. My main objective was to have the word relevant to the needs of the site. This was a political event and I wanted the intention to be easily understood by the public. The title '*Dear Kingston*' was intended to act as an open letter to our city. The Artists were also asked to choose their own WORD(s) and their own material as well.

For example, Dave Gordon became intrigued with the fenced off pier in front of the old Psychiatry Hospital. Why was it inaccessible to the public? What was this pier used for? With a little research he discovered that the old wharf once was a rail terminus that delivered coal to the ships. The Ministry of Transportation fenced the area off when it was considered unsafe from age and deterioration. David chose charcoal as his material to write the word 'RESTORE' on the wharf for us to view from above: a clear example of word, material and site aligned in meaning.

Don't try to hold on to it.

How do you personally gauge the level of success of an event like this?

On many levels. The main thing was that it was a giant political success. Close to 500 people participated in the Shoreline Shuffle and many voiced their opinions on public waterfront survey on our website www.wateraccessgroup.weebly.com

Just a few weeks ago, Kingston City Council put through a motion to form a 'working group' to discuss and design a long term integrated waterfront plan. Thanks to Lea Westlake's application skills, and sponsored by the Kingston School of Art, we were awarded a community grant from CFKA (Community Foundation of Kingston and Area) that allowed me to pay the artists.

Professionally I gained experience as a curator, and I very much enjoyed coming up with a concept and letting the artists individually respond. The project grew naturally, and as each artist expanded on their version, a new idea would spiral through the group thread. I also was one of the participating artists and had never worked outdoors. This has tweaked my interest and would like to continue to be involved in site specific projects if the right circumstances come along.

Following up on that, how separate is a project like this from your own art practice? Where do you see crossover, if at all?

Very different. I toil away in my studio day after day quite happy in my solitude. With this project I found that I really liked working outside and there was sort of a 'rogue' element which I enjoyed. When I was smearing clay over the 4 cars at 6am, the fog horn blowing every 2 minutes, the heavy morning mist, and then 8 police officers approaching me (the crazy lady), that was a good bit of fun.

Did you have issues with city regulations? What were the main challenges?

Thankfully no. David McDonald and I had met with Lynn Grivich the City Events Coordinator to discuss permits and insurance etc. I had reassured her that none of the artwork would obstruct public access, installment would be temporary and unfixed, and that the sculptures would not harm the environment. I also told her that each artist would be standing near their art piece

protecting people from walking into it. I do believe that this face-to-face meeting was important. If I had applied to the city in writing, the outcome may have been different and no doubt bungled in red tape. I am grateful for this.

What is the next stage of the project?

The Pump House Museum has accepted my proposal to showcase all the documentation of the Shoreline Shuffle in April 2014. That is, all the photography taken from 16 professional photographers, videos of the artists and their work, and I also hope to add an interactive component to keep the conversation relevant and current.

I anticipate hosting a few public forums within the month, one to publicly discuss the Kingston's long term integrated Waterfront City plan, and another, possibly to host a public event with Cultural Services regarding a new public art plan. The first meeting was hosted by the Agnes Etherington just weeks ago (October 2013) and I have offered to host the next one. I think the *Dear Kingston...* photography exhibit will be the perfect environment for both these discussions.

Were there any unexpected outcomes or surprises?

The insurance cost was a surprise and unfortunately we didn't factor it into the grant application. We did not know that a policy was required for a moving event.

Because this was an organized public event, we needed a permit for gathering at Douglas Fluhrer Park as well as liability insurance, which cost about \$650. We were not permitted to have motorboats or swimmers either.

It was a nice surprise to learn that the City of Kingston was so helpful and communicative. Does that make me cynical? I guess it does, but I have been proven wrong. They coordinated the Lake Ontario Opening with the Shoreline Shuffle event. This was equally advantageous for both events.

What advice would you offer to artists, especially emerging artists, on working on collaborative and community projects like this?

There are many local organizations who are willing to support community initiatives. If you have a good idea, there is financial support out there. Irina Skvortsova won an Awesome Kingston grant for puppet making workshops to create large mascots for the Shoreline Shuffle. We received the CFKA Grant but there are many more related to community art or the environment or both. The City was helpful and openly willing to collaborate with us.

Good ideas have a gestalt factor; in other words, positive things will take place beyond your plans. Don't try to hold onto it. Let it evolve.

ARTISTS WHO PARTICIPATED IN Dear Kingston...

Jane Derby, Christine Dewancker, Laura Donefer, Suki Faulkner, Dave Gordon, Maggie Hogan, Dorene Inglis, Robert Kauffman & Rock Balancing group, Marney McDiarmid, Erika Olson, Chantal Rousseau, Joan Sharpe, Su Sheedy, Rebecca Soudant

SU SHEEDY was born and raised in Toronto, Ontario, Canada and has lived in Kingston, Ontario since 1992. She began painting full time in 2001, and her work has appeared on TV shows, movies, and documentaries. Her work resides in a number of collections including the Visual Art Collection of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada.





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Too many people have lost the ability to be outraged

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cheyanne talks precarity

EVOLVE OR PERISH

As part of the Media Arts Network of Ontario/réseau des arts médiatiques de l'ontario (MANo/rAMo) Evolve or Perish symposium, I was invited to speak about precarious cultural labour from my position as an independent curator and writer. While the mundane struggles of these positions inform my thinking about precariousness as a contemporary social phenomena, what I tried to do with my presentation was circumscribe a much larger field of precarious labour, feeling for the potential of resonance between cultural work and other kinds of “flexible” jobs. Cross-sectoral alliances will be difficult to construct and maintain, and it is clear that things cannot remain the way they are forever (obviously), but precarious living conditions coupled with state austerity seems to be forcing the hand of change now. As the panel that concluded the symposium suggested, we’ve got a couple of options: evolution, mutation, amputation or death. What follows is a transcription of my presentation.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY “PRECARITY”?

What do we mean when we use this term? To be precarious in the dictionary sense of things it is to be dependent on something beyond one’s authority. It’s a material or immaterial insecurity that comes from control resting with another—often a set of circumstances or a system incapable of being motivated by care.

Broadly, feminist- and literary-theorist Judith Butler proposes that “precarity” designates that politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks of support and become differentially exposed to injury, violence, and death. Such populations are at heightened risk of disease, poverty, starvation, displacement, and of exposure to violence without protection.¹

When Butler talks about precarity, she invokes the gender queer and the racialized, and these experiences of precarity are nodes of intersectionality that, in the cultural field, interact with specific labour characteristics such as fluid working hours, high levels of mobility, hyper-communication and flexibility, not to mention, often, shit wages and a lack of benefits. Precarity, as an economic embodiment, is often related to unpredictable, insecure and exploitative labour relations. In this moment of late-capitalism and austerity, precarious work proliferates as a symptom of what has been described as “changing conditions of production, [such as] deindustrialization, outsourcing, declining unionization, and a shift from full-time salaried work to flexible arrangements with weak protections.”²

As it is practically deployed, precarity seems to reinforce any number of repressive social forces, such as racism and misogyny. For instance, “whilst women have almost always done ‘immaterial and affective labour, often with little recognition in both fields’ precariousness is only discussed ‘at the moment when the Western male worker began feeling the negative effects of the new post-industrial flexible job market.’”³ And based on my colloquial experiences, artist-run centres? They are ruled by women. The directorship of large museums? Not so much. Further, in the cata-

logue *The Global Contemporary and the Rise of New Art Worlds*, the authors note that “it is immensely important—if the global economy is to function—for the world labour force to be ethnicized, for a correlation to be established between ethnicity and economic role; for example, at the international level by imposing low wages on non-European, Asian, or African workers, or at the national level on immigrants. [Or, as our specific case may be, on Indigenous populations.] The visible classification of labour power and ethnic groups provides the index for income distributions...This institutionalized racism (and it goes beyond xenophobia) is one of the most significant pillars of historical capitalism. Racism serves as an all-embracing ideology to justify inequality.”⁴

HOW DID WE COME TO BE PRECARIOUS?

On the one hand, the proliferation of precarity could be read as a response to worker demands. Personally, flexible working hours allow me to take on multiple projects (both an intellectual desire to work diversely and a practical consequence of needing to pay the rent), and traveling to art fairs means I can see parts of the world I wouldn’t otherwise have the opportunity to visit, and I like working from home sometimes. It is not simply market ideology that manifests these kinds of working conditions, but these kinds of “flexibility” certainly do serve the inevitable thrust of capitalism to extract increased labour in exchange for fewer investments in the labour force which powers the economy. On the other hand, the condition of precarity is “unevenly experienced” across the workforce, since while I may value or even choose my contingent work arrangements, elsewhere they are imposed on others.⁵ Combined with hysterical debt-loads from post-secondary education and credit cards, and then the mundane costs of living that are subject to inflation at a rate not matched by wages, the lack of security associated w/ precariat flexibility conspires to leave giant swathes of the working class extremely vulnerable. Granted, some people thrive under these conditions, but most of us do something a bit more humble: we subsist. Barely. As Judith Butler points out, “neo-liberalism works through producing dispensable populations; it exposes populations to precarity; it establishes modes of work that presume that labour will always be temporary; it decimates long-standing institutions of social democracy, withdraws social services from those who are most radically unprotected—the poor, the homeless, the undocumented—because the value of social services or economic rights to basic provisions like shelter and food has been replaced by an economic calculus that values only the entrepreneurial capacities of individuals and moralizes against all those who are unable to fend for themselves or make capitalism work for them.”⁶ In fact, capitalism requires that it not work for most of us: there can only be so many millionaires. This is not just a problem of the cultural sector.

And yet, across the field of precarious labour, cultural workers carry a special kind of social capital; our jobs are cool. However fragile my financial stability is or however guaranteed my human rights are, I get to pass through the world with certain privileges, one of which is working in the cultural sector. It feels gross to say this, but in a way, we are the popular kids at the precariat high-school. In these kinds conversations, we cannot be inward looking only. It is our duty, really, our DUTY, to align ourselves with the aspect of this struggle to which we belong the least, which is to seek positions of advocacy outside our cultural cache. At the least, this means recognizing that expe-

riences of precarity in the cultural sector may not be representative of the experience of precarity elsewhere, and that our experiences may not be the most suitable upon which to build cross-sectoral alliances that could address the larger phenomena of economic and social insecurity as it is experienced today. In this respect, it will involve a lot of listening (and not necessarily so much talking).

“Granted, some people thrive under these conditions, but most of us do something a bit more humble: we subsist. Barely.”

OUR PRECARIETY IN RELATION

And to take this one step further, I’d like to quote the writer Jacob Wren: “There is all this discourse about how the freelance artist is the model for the precarious worker, and it must be true, but for me what’s actually the real criminal problem is not that information workers are working 24 hours a day, it’s that people in China are working in the conditions they’re working to make the computers and the iPods we are working on. All this talk about immaterial labour is a mask for the material labour behind it, which has actually gone back to pre-union factory conditions...You have these mass suicide protests in China at Foxconn, where the people putting together the iPods, hundreds of them, are committing suicide to protest their labour conditions. And how bad do your labour conditions have to be? I think we have no idea...With immaterial labour, the material labour is still happening, but the pure exploitation has been moved off the immaterial labour and onto the material factory worker in another country, who we don’t see.”⁷

It seems that our precarity is of a different sort, a slow death, by inertia or obesity or ennui, and I would like to propose our precarity in relationship to the precarities that allow ours to exist.⁸ When we work all our waking hours, tap tapping on our laptops, texting on our smart phones, sending emails all over the world in English, our precarity comes to be seen as rather the justification for a level of precarity many of us have probably not ever had lived contact with. Strictly, it is just not the same to spend all your time thinking about exhibitions while making slightly more than minimum wage then it is to work 16-hour days in a factory that you cannot leave, and when you do, with mere dollars in your pocket. It’s just not the same. Our precarity is on the backs of other precarity, much more precarious than ours. And because changing systems of globalization, slavery, racism and capitalism are so daunting as to be paralyzing, we excuse our inaction with the claim that nothing can be done to effectively change things.

AGAINST THE SAME SAME OR REVOLUTION

I feel like the increasing ubiquity and severity of precarity is the perfect consequence of capitalism. How efficient or futile will our advocating for different ways of organizing labour in general (or cultural production in particular) be within capitalism? Kinda seems impossible, especially given the claim, reiterated by Slavoj Žižek and Mark Fischer, that it is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end

of capitalism. And yet! We operate within different economies everyday, such as when we cook for our lovers or trade documentation for artwork or volunteer. The failure of our imagination that Žižek and Fischer diagnose comes when we place every type of labour in a capitalist framework, ignoring the fact we simultaneously work in multiple economies all the time. Plus, come on, capital is in a moment of crisis. I’m not sure if this is the revolution Marx foretold of, but at the very least, this moment can be one reconsideration.

Put another way, what does the crisis of precarity make possible? As the availability of economic and natural resources declines, how about a different architecture of how these remaining resources move?!

SOLUTIONS/PROPOSITIONS

Given that precarity manifests across a range of factors, such as class, race and gender, there is the difficult potential of building solidarities amongst us. And I say “difficult” because if these alliances are to be fruitful, they must not erase the power differentials and social inequities that mark these varied experiences. It would be to understand what we have in common without effacing the very real differences of how precarity is experienced. I think about this as holding a space for not-knowing that is something more than polite deferral, and something more than the strategic mobilization of what is common for the benefit of the few. For us, as cultural workers, I think the first step might be to be attentive to fellow-feeling that may come from the very different experiences of, say, janitors, migrant labourers, office temps, service workers et cetera.

Maybe this is unrealistic? What do you think? Do you think that addressing precarity as a systemic condition of late capitalism will require collective address?

While I believe that labour precarity is somehow the perfect expression of capitalism, there are things being done already, w/in this system, to address the deleterious effects of living with so little security, such as:

- Co-working spaces, such as Bento Miso, offer medical and dental benefits to its members.

- NDP MP Andrew Cash just introduced a bill to the House of Commons called the Urban Worker Strategy (which is a strange name, but okay), which is a policy meant to address some of the structural mechanisms that perpetuate precarity, and it includes proposals for expanding access to employment insurance; taxation reform; expanding access to pensions; enforcing labour laws for temp agency workers; strengthening enforcement of rules around internships; extending supplementary health benefits to the precariously employed; and working with provinces to prevent job misclassification, the legal sleight of hand wherein employers hire workers as independent contractors to evade employment standards. The bill hasn’t passed (yet?), but as has been pointed out, “for many workers in unstable employment, policy is one of the few mechanisms for improving their social and economic conditions.”⁹

- And speaking of policy, there is the incredible proposal currently being debated in Switzerland to for a guaranteed basic income to all citizens, which in this specific formulation is the work of an artist, Enno Schmidt.

And then, here are some wild imaginations with the caveat that I don’t know how to make any of this happen:

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LIDS: Withdrawn

One of our LIDS slogans is “DO MORE WITH MORE, DO LESS WITH LESS.” We’ve been asking ourselves and our colleagues: What if more artists and organizations were up front about shortfalls, lack of resources, shrinking budgets. What would it look like to give representation to the funds that we DON’T have? Rather than rushing to stop the gap with people who are willing to work for free, what if we made tangible the space where there is nothing, where there is a lack?

- What if, somehow, subsistence support was offered to people to not make work for the sake of making work? So many people I know labour creatively at jobs they hate, producing Facebook games the deploy addiction mechanics in their design decisions (and not some lofty idea of passing-time pleasure), or doing social media upkeep for plastic surgeons (gummy bear breast implants, anyone?), or in production crews making shitty knock-offs of consumer products that no one needs anyway? What if we paid people to not contribute to the deluge of cultural crap that chokes and drowns us, both in the making and in the consumption?

- Instead of mourning job security within a capitalist framework, which was never sustainable anyway, this far-reaching experience of precarity could be used to imagine the thing that comes when late-capitalism comes to an end. Maybe the experience of precarity will be the thing that allows for an economic revolution?!

FOOTNOTES

¹ Butler, Judith. “Performativity, Precarity and Sexual Politics,” AIBR. Revista de Antropología Iberoamericana, vol. 4, num. 3, September-December 2009.

² Cohen, Nicole and Greig de Peuter, “The politics of precarity,” briarpatch magazine, 01 November 2013.

³ Fantone, L. (2007). “Precarious changes: gender and generational politics in contemporary Italy,” Feminist Review 87, pages 5-20. As quoted in Gill, R. C. and Andy Pratt, “In the social factory? Immaterial labour, precariousness and cultural work,” Theory, Culture and Society #25, page 18.

⁴ Belting, Hans, Andrea Buddensieg and Peter Weibel (eds.). *The Global Contemporary at the Rise of New Art Worlds*, USA: MIT Press, 2013, pages 23-24.

⁵ Andrew Ross makes this point in “The New Geography of Work. Power to the Precarious?,” OnCurating Journal #16, 2013.

⁶ Butler, Judith. “Fiscal Crisis, or the Neo-Liberal Assault on Democracy?,” Greek Left Review, 12 November 2011.

⁷ Lee, Yaniya, Chris Kraus and Jacob Wren. In *Different Situations Different Behaviour Will Produce Different Results: A Chapbook*, Toronto: Paperpusher, 2013, pages 23-24.

⁸ Lauren Berlant uses the idea of slow death to describe the experience of living in this stage of late-capitalism, which she explores in-depth in “Slow Death (Sovereignty, Obesity, Lateral Agency,” a chapter in her book, *Cruel Optimism*.

⁹ Cohen, Nicole and Greig de Peuter, “The politics of precarity,” briarpatch magazine, 01 November 2013.

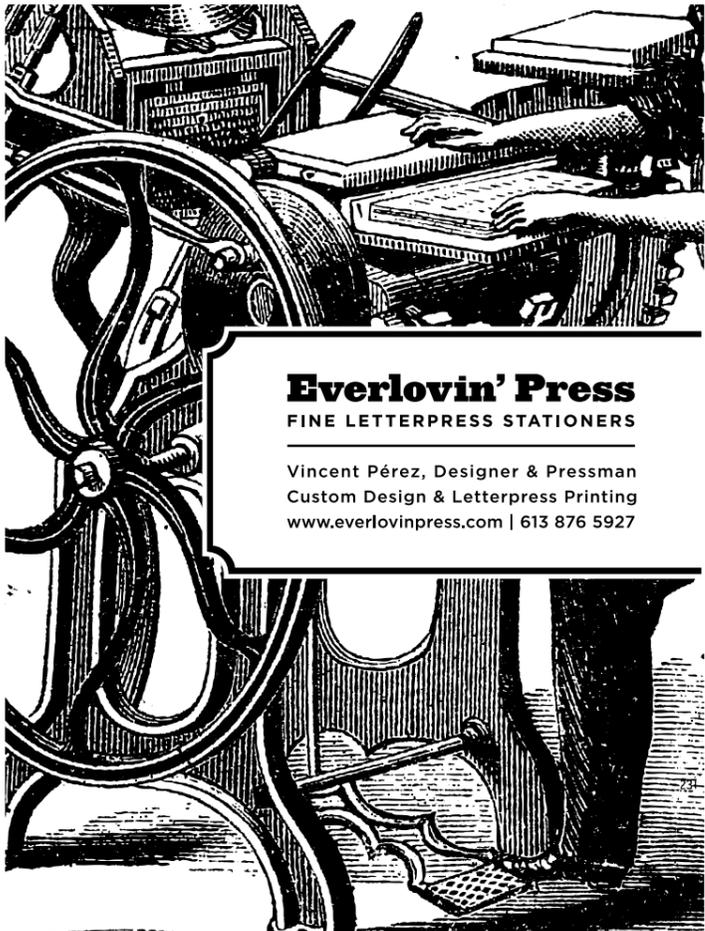
cheyanne turions is an independent, Toronto-based curator and writer who holds a degree in Philosophy from the University of British Columbia. Her curatorial projects have been presented at the Western Front (Vancouver), VIVO Media Arts (Vancouver), Gallery TPW (Toronto), the Images Festival (Toronto), A Space (Toronto) and the Art Gallery of Windsor (Windsor), among others. Her writing has been published broadly, including with *Canadian Art*, *C Magazine*, *FUSE* and *Monte Cristo*. In addition to her curatorial work and writing practice, she is the director of *No Reading After the Internet* (Toronto), is part of the Editorial Advisory Committee at *FUSE* magazine, and sits on the Board of Directors for *Fillip* magazine and the Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Centre.

THE LADIES’ INVITATIONAL DEADBEAT SOCIETY (LIDS) was founded in 2006 as a closely-knit affiliation of then-unemployed cultural workers, not working, but still bustin’ ass within Alberta artist-run culture. Their activities make visible and politicize women’s roles in the local arts economy through tactical laziness, crafty collaboration, over-performance, and wild hilarity. LIDS is: Anthea Black, Nicole Burisch, and Wednesday Lupyciv.

An excerpt to *The Value Of Our (Collective) Work* can be found here: <http://ladiesinvitationaldeadbeatsociety.files.wordpress.com/2012/04/the-value-of-our-collective-workfor-web.pdf>

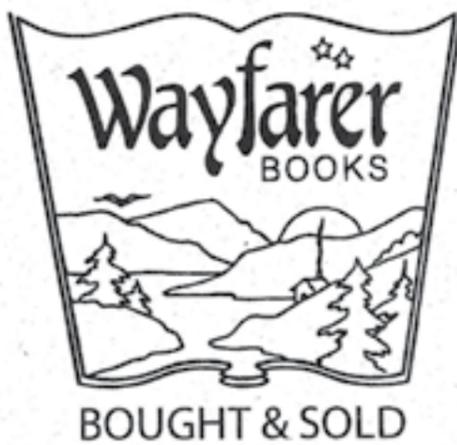
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