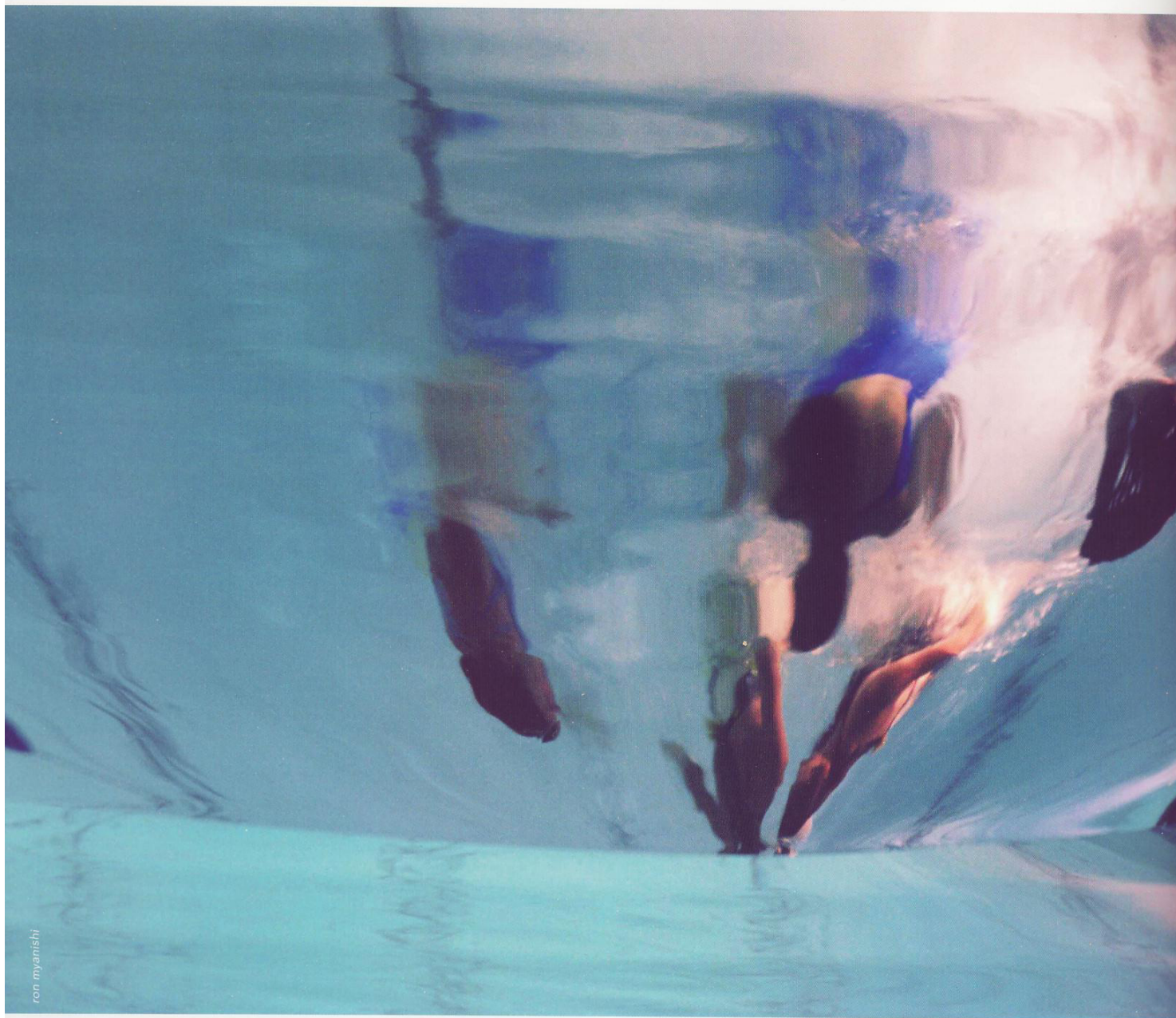


water babies



ron myanishi

Night Swim
the waves 2006

The ebullient Christie Pearson, performance and installation artist, was involved with three water-based projects in Toronto last year, working with three different groups. WADE has an interest in art in public spaces, and aims to open a dialogue between the arts, the community and the urban landscape. URBANVESSEL creates performance works and multi- and inter-disciplinary projects rooted in the sounds and spaces of our cities' overlooked corners. THE WAVES was part of Scotiabank Nuit Blanche, a signature event of the City of Toronto's Live With Culture campaign.

Trained as an architect, inspired by public traditions, she collaborates with choreographers, composers, visual and performing artists on events which amplify our relation to natural and constructed environments. She addresses architecture, the city and the rituals of daily life, and her projects present space as noisy, kinetic sites full of public agency, voices and interruptions. Her engagement with Toronto as both a public network and a civic body is both extensive and inspiring. We should have a wade weekend in every city and town in Canada.



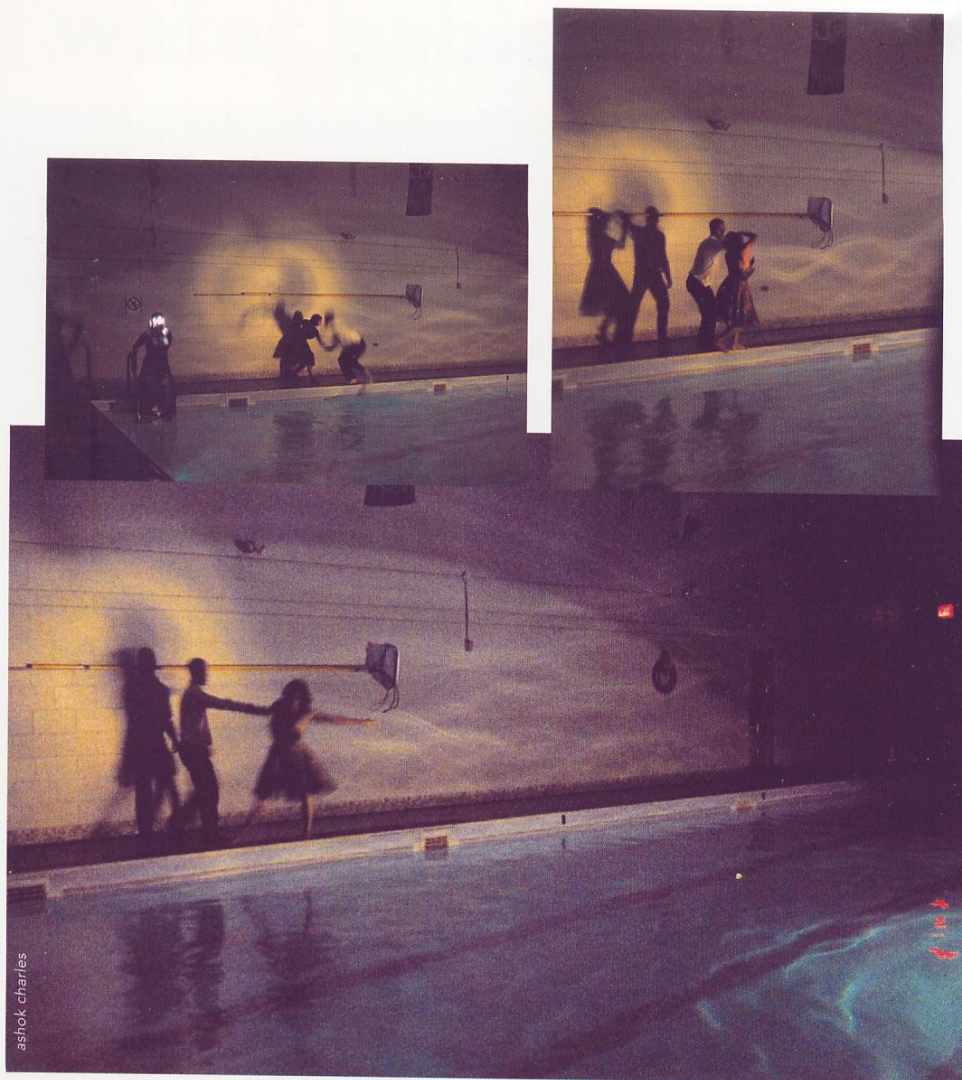
Blue
Gwen MacGregor
WADE 2004



WADE

WADE, curated by Sandra Rechico and Christie Pearson in conjunction with YYZ Artists' Outlet, started in 2004 and now happens every other year. For one weekend, Toronto's 100 wading pools are turned over to artists. As they build projects in, with and around each pool, an innate sense of meaning and importance of place develops for each site. Parallels between the city, the pool, and the public, raise awareness of pools as public domain. Wading pools relate to both a neighbourhood scale and a city-wide network, and combine recreative potential, the childhood experience of wading, and the cultural implications of the park.

The projects empower communities by asking them to engage in a manner often atypical to a wading pool site. People wade through pools filled with rose petals or clear plastic bags of water, stamp wet wool into felt; in one pool, sound compositions are generated by waves created by the waders. As the original intent of each work becomes modified through public participation, the audience is added as author. WADE considers art as a social process in which we can all participate, contributing to the life of the park and the city as a cultural construct. Pools turn into places of wildlife, community and congregation. Toronto's identity as a collection of communities is emphasized and its diversity celebrated.



SLIP
urbanvessel
2006

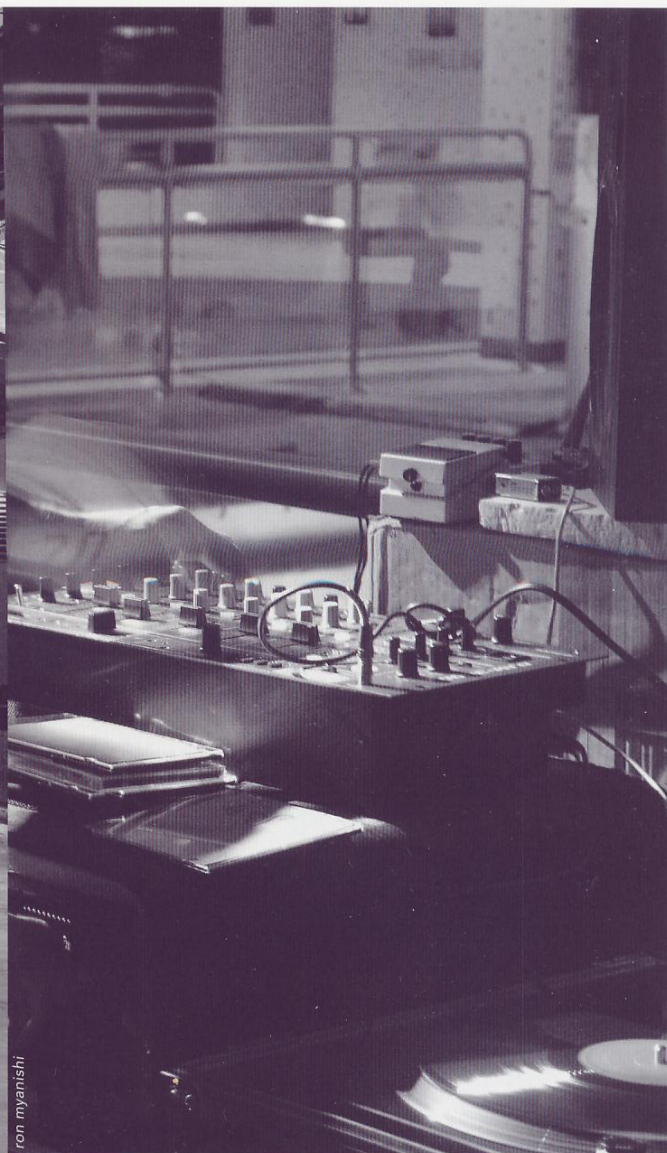
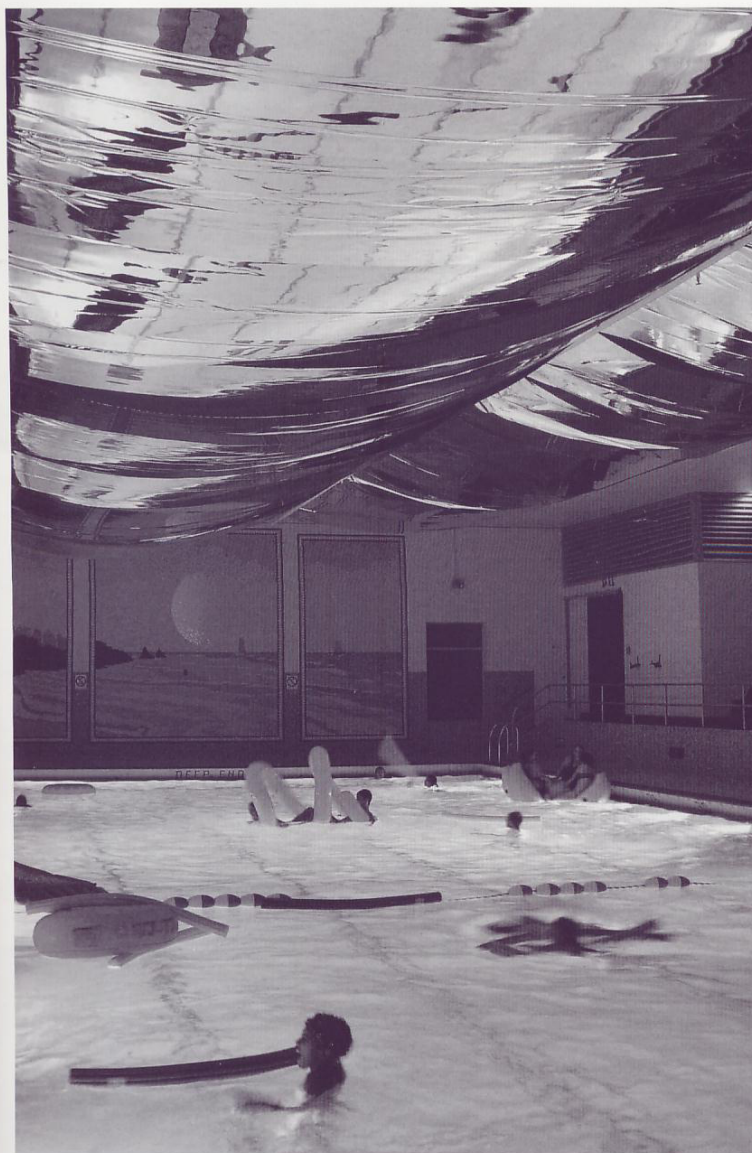
SLIP

URBANVESSEL consists of writer and actor Anna Chatterton, choreographer Yvonne Ng, composer Juliet Palmer and Christie Pearson. In 2006 they presented SLIP, a site-specific interdisciplinary performance for the Harrison Baths, returning the baths to an open, passionate public life.

The act of cleansing is both sensual and spiritual; a bath house is a place we become naked, removing our sweat and public personas. In Toronto, these rituals have almost been forgotten. What would our city look like if we reimagined the bath house as shared public space?

The Harrison Baths and Swimming Pool are housed in a 1960s building: an urban oasis providing free showers, swimming, washrooms and laundry facilities. In many cultures, the public bath is the focus of community conversation and exchange. SLIP states, 'the act of cleansing is both sensual and spiritual; a bath house is a place we become naked, removing our sweat and public personas. In Toronto, these rituals have been forgotten. What would our city look like if we reimagined the bath house as shared public space?'

URBANVESSEL imagined and then performed a collective history for the Harrison Baths, travelling the labyrinth of the Harrison Baths complex from the tiled lobby, through the gargantuan men's locker room, to the majestic pool, and finally, through the series of intimate rooms making up the women's space. With jazz singer and improviser Christine Duncan, opera singer Vilma Vitols, Japanese folk singer Aki Takahashi, and drummer Jean Martin with Louis Laberge-Côté and Susanne Chui who added their bodies and voices to the mix, dance was fused to theatre, music and installation. The music was visceral and vocal, combining body slaps with handheld percussion and the sounds of the space itself. A grimy, razzmatazz Hollywood chorus line, a sparse and intimate Japanese folk song, and opera echoed off the tiles. Sound, mist, water and light transformed the everyday into a dreamlike space.



ron myanishi

Night Swim
the waves
2006

NIGHT SWIM

September 2006: a free event that crossed sound and light installation, a music festival and a swimming pool party, was held from sunset till sunrise at the Trinity Bellwoods Community Centre swimming pool. THE WAVES transformed a much loved downtown public swimming pool into a shimmering, reflective dream-space with kinetic sculpture by Rob Cruickshank. Wire contributor, Marcus Boon invited sound artists, musicians and DJs to produce site specific works and sets in a sound environment designed by sound designer Darren Copeland, which included underwater microphones and speakers. Visitors swam, watched, joined in.

Sound is important to all these projects. Night Swim included colossal drone-scapes by Montreal's Tim Hecker; loops by Beijing-based creators of the Buddha Machine FM3; guitar and bass trance music from Michigan's Windy and Carl; turntable compositions by Marina Rosenfeld and experimental tribal rhythms by Raz Mesinai from New York. From Toronto, electronic composer and improviser Sarah Peebles joined Sandro Perri/Polmo Polpo's indie funk, sexy nocturnal grooves with Luis Jacob, baile funk, grime and dancehall from Geoff Snack aka DJ Showcase Showdown, lo-fi electro-acoustics by Andrew Wedman, and ecstatic sustained tones by Orixasound. These performance/installations hybridise public space, sensually extending it to many cultures and communities. ♣