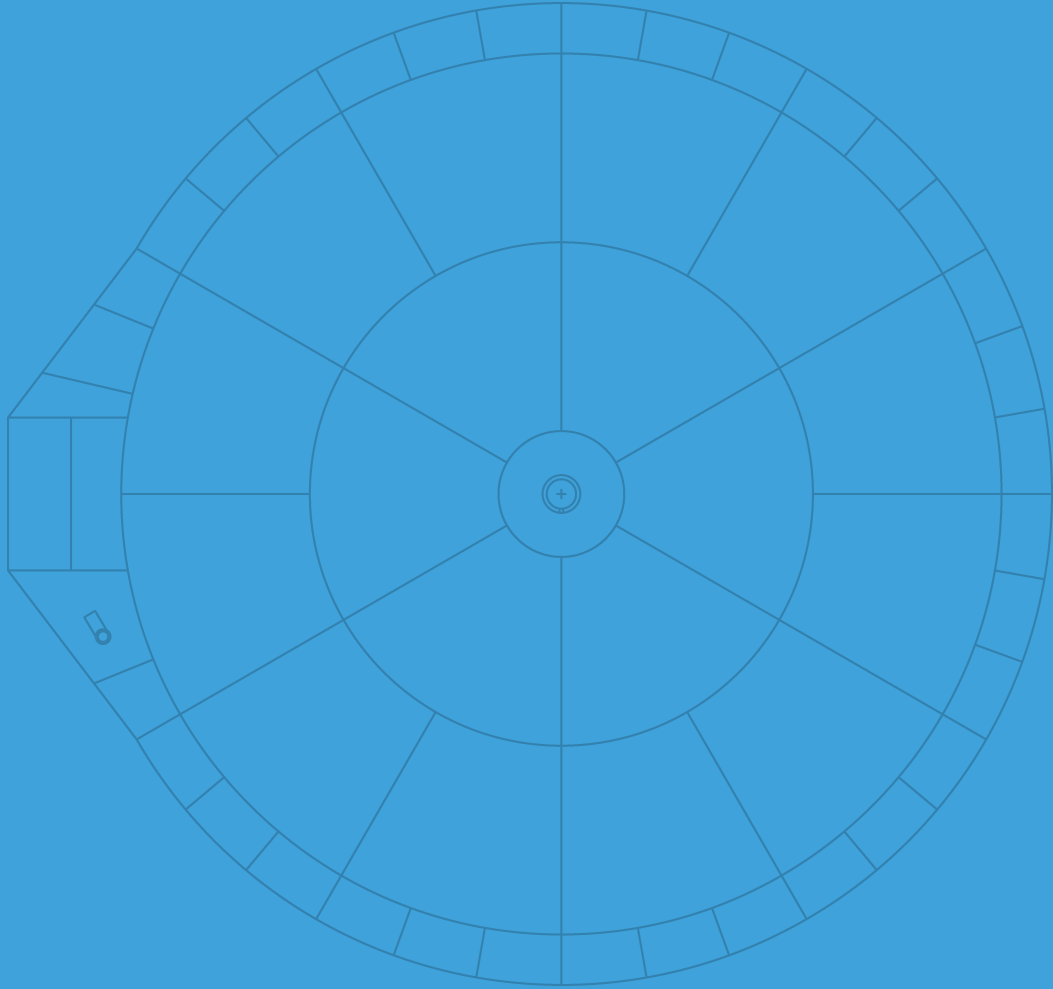




wade 2006





introduction

Gregory Elgstrand
Director, YYZ

WADE 2006 went, in a word, swimmingly. The heat and the humidity of Toronto in July always call for opportunities for people to cool off. The City of Toronto provides citizens of all ages a respite in the form of public wading pools situated in community parks throughout this overheated metropolis. The cool pools of municipal water are mostly populated by children but everyone is welcome to take a cool dip and splash around. Of course, artists can partake too and WADE invites them to jump right in.

By all accounts, WADE 2006 was even more successful than its first incarnation in 2004—more pools, more artists and more people. It was something to see, fourteen artists and collectives using these pools to present contemporary art to the people of Toronto's diverse communities. Even the often fickle population of people that make up Toronto's so-called contemporary art scene took off their shoes alongside their neighbours. The pejorative phrase, "You're all wet!" took on a new, positive ring. If you were not all wet at WADE, you missed the point.

YYZ was delighted to have had the opportunity to participate again with the WADE Collective on this worthwhile endeavour for the benefit of artists and audiences. All of the participating artists took to the project like ducks, you know, to water and it could not have been the success that it was without them. But then too, mention and praise need to be heaped upon a whole flock of participants, volunteers, city workers, funding agencies, sponsors, donors and the communities around each pool that had the importantly fun job of bringing each project to life. On a final note, I offer this piece of advice to the City of Toronto: the next pool that you (we) build should include the participation of a contemporary artist in every step of the process, from drawings on paper to the hole in the ground, to the first time it is filled with water to the first people who stick their toes in it. Then it could be WADE all summer long.



wading

Christie Pearson + Sandra Rechico
Curators

On a hot summer's day, we revisit the urban childhood pleasure of cool water on concrete. The following year, the wading pool has been filled in. Have pools out-lived their use in our neighbourhoods?

The roots of the western public swimming pool lie in rituals of cleansing and military athleticism. Building on the traditions of the ancient Greeks' cold water showers at the sports palaestra, the Roman thermae offered grand pools and programs combining utilitarian, social and cultural activities with sensual pleasure. The cardiovascular benefits of swimming, and its practicality as a survival skill for soldiers, inspired the military to expand their use of pools in the nineteenth century. At the same time, civic bodies administered public baths to the urban working class in order to combat the hygienic ills of the industrial revolution.

With modern residential plumbing, the need for shared cleansing facilities waned, and the focus on swimming pools shifted back to exercise. Recreational pools really began to flourish after the swimming competitions at the first modern Olympics in Athens in 1896. Shallow

wading pools were developed to more safely accommodate children while adults swam nearby. While wading pools can be used for swimming instruction, children left to their own devices will reinvent them as arenas for free-form, improvised water play. By the 1940s and 50s, these features were commonly accepted as an element of pool design in North America. There are currently 112 wading pools spread across Toronto, located in the largest and the smallest parks. No new pools have been built since the 1970s, and older pools are being transformed into splash pads, which offer water features triggered by buttons and levers. These pools are economically beneficial because they have no standing water and consequently need no pool attendants, but unfortunately the prescriptive format usurps the unstructured play activity of the older wading pools.

We asked ourselves: could there be a way to redirect attention to the disappearing wading pools? Was there a way to show what an asset these curious spaces are, and to showcase their social and architectural value?

Wading pools are valuable as landmarks within communities for the gathering spaces they offer and the public play activities they support. They are also valuable as a system within the city, linking communities together and celebrating our shared water resources.

WADE was created through an interest in works of art that are interventionist and temporary within existing public space. The project poses questions about public art and its potential agency in day-to-day life. Wading pools typically have a well-defined use, a specific schedule, and a predictable user group. But perhaps these parameters could be expanded, exemplifying the under-use of many of our shared resources? We saw in the wading pools the potential for temporary projects that would challenge peoples' expectations. The recreational places of the city—places for contemplation and pleasure—are spatial disjunctures, interruptions within the continuous working grid. Festivals are a temporal counterpart, providing a break in everyday scheduled activities. In WADE, the two are combined, creating a provocative moment in the summer pool

season. Offering accidental discoveries of unpredictable events, WADE creates a ripple effect of engagement in city spaces that connects us to a shared history. The experience extends beyond the pools into the parks, the communities they serve and the city as a whole where we can celebrate our differences and similarities, linking the pools as a networked system in time and space within the city's metabolism.

"...environments are combined socio-physical constructions that are actively and historically produced, both in terms of social context and physical-environmental qualities. Whether we consider the making of urban parks, urban nature reserves, or skyscrapers, they each contain and express fused socio-physical processes that contain and embody particular metabolic and social relations...

Produced environments are specific historical results of socio-environmental processes. The urban world is...part natural/part social, part technical/part cultural, but with no clear boundaries, centres, or margins." Heynen, Nik, Maria Kaika and Erik Swyngedouw (eds.), *In the Nature of Cities—Urban Ecology and the Politics of Urban Metabolism* (Routledge: New York, 2006), page 11.

The projects in WADE 2004 and 2006 originated in performance art, installation, and dance. These art forms all share a structure of multiple layers through which we interact and respond. For one weekend, the temporary events during WADE added to the regular community use of the sites, reinventing possibilities for participation. Parents didn't just remain on the sidelines watching their kids, instead they got in and played. The children continued to improvise situational performances, as they always do. At the artists provocations, everyone participated in creating the artworks. WADE projects provided direct connection to audience and engagement with the environment, creating works where the audience became a collaborator. For artists, the unpredictable nature of such collaborations can be stimulating and challenging. But while there may be a loss of control over the individual's artistic vision, there emerges instead a sense of shared public authorship.

What WADE leaves behind is not physically identifiable as public art, yet memories and half-formed possibilities linger in the minds of the participants and the city.

Our hope is that the erosion of the passive role of the audience will extend beyond these temporary art experiences into other public spaces and activities. Really, art can be anywhere.



a pool is not a stage

Sally McKay

A pool is not a stage. Granted, wading pools are circles of activity—parents sit around the edge and watch—but the children in the water are not performing, they are playing; experimenting physically with flotation and reflection, socialising with other kids, imagining narratives and being themselves. And, apart from the occasional bully or watery mishap, it's mostly very fun.

There is a theory in quantum physics called background independence, which calls for the removal of the stage. We are used to a model in which events take place and objects interact against a background of space and time. Models of background independence focus solely on relationships and interactions, and the stage is only defined as it emerges from the process of the players. There is a similar theory in art called relational aesthetics, which places the art in the collective experience of the audience, rather than in the object. Both theories involve a beautiful dynamic in which the participants of a given event are in effect the creators of the event. In WADE the artists, the waders, the splashers, the submerged and the floaters, the friends

and family sitting on the grass, the pool attendants, the art audience and the passersby are all participants.

What role can art play in such a vibrant context? The WADE projects do not impose themselves on the park, rather they join in. Sandra Gregson laid wide strips of artificial grass in and beside the pool. Kids still charged around in the water as usual, but this simple shift of materials offered a different kind of physical experience—soft and slippery—just for the day. The subtle sound-ing buoys by Shannon McMullen and Fabian Winkler bobbed and warbled in the pool while all the regular kid-activated interaction took place around them. The buoys had a satisfying robust construction, like sturdy toys. While I was there, a little kid kept running his fire truck into one of them and saying “vrooom.” Other pieces—such as Nick Tobier’s ambitious choreographed dance number and the dance/monologue combination by Peter Chin and Louise Laberge-Côté—were more akin theatre. The pool was cleared for the duration of the performance, and people sat on the side to watch, some of the smaller ones still panting and dripping.

Yet even in these works the pool did not become a separate zone, like the specialized platform of a stage, but remained the territory of the audience, enhancing an intimate relationship with the performers based on the familiarity of a shared physical connection.

I have mentioned just four of the fourteen works in *WADE*. All of the pieces are described in detail throughout this catalogue, and each of these interactive projects was successful in making its own unique set of connections with the participants. The open-endedness of the *WADE* projects and their prioritising of the audience's experience remind me of two of my favourite public artworks.

In 1983, the American artist Mierle Laderman Ukeles created a project called "Social Mirror" in which she covered the two sides of a New York sanitation truck with mirrored panels. As the truck drove by, you would see yourself and your surroundings. The piece was political, turning on the public perception of sanitation workers and, with a simple visual device, conceptually engaging citizens of New York in the social project of

keeping the city clean. In 1998, Canadian artist Adrian Blackwell installed a piece called "Public Water Closet" at the corner of Spadina and Queen in Toronto, in which he remodelled a portable toilet inserting a two-way mirror as the door. From the outside, you saw yourself and your surroundings, from the inside you could watch the street. Again, there was politics implicit in the artwork. The toilet was functional and the seat was shared by a spectrum of participants, providing a radically communal experience in what is usually a very private sphere. Mirrors are operative in both of these works, and it is through reflection that the participants become engaged.

A pool is like a mirror in that the surface is reflective. Not only that, but to submerge yourself in water is to acknowledge yourself as an entity, to momentarily release your body from the physics of the regular world. For many people, contemporary art within a gallery setting is an alienating experience. Established art venues often imply an authority and exclusive knowledge set that can be off-putting to people without specific

art education. The art experiences in *WADE* happen in a sphere where people are in an open and reflective frame of mind, where the invitation to play and experiment is the default paradigm. While the works in *WADE* are not as explicitly political as the two I mentioned above, there is a radical aspect to the project.

Pearson and Rechico approached the City for approval in 2002, two years before the first *WADE* project in 2004. Says Pearson, "There was plenty of intense communication required with people at many levels; all through the Economic Development, Culture and Tourism Department, including wading pool administrators and the attendants working the individual pools." The process was labour intensive, but largely, and somewhat surprisingly, positive. Pearson explains, "More of the people from the City than we'd imagined wanted to experiment. There is space in the City—both politically and physically—for a lot more projects and interventions like ours."

Christie Pearson and Sandra Rechico, the curators of *WADE*, worked closely with both Rebecca Ward,

Cultural Affairs Officer with the City of Toronto, and Gary Sanger, Supervisor of Recreation and Facilities, to negotiate this large scale public project. All parties are to be commended for developing a practical and complex plan that everyone could agree to. It is possible to imagine a different scenario, where City bureaucrats might retreat in fear of a perception of public risk. But they didn't, and this is a particularly hopeful fact given the political clamp that seems to be currently tightening around human rights and freedoms in other areas.

At the time of writing, the American Coastguard have been test-firing machine guns in the Great Lakes in a supposed attempt to prepare themselves for an unknown and undefined threat along the watery border. The contents of laptops are now being scrutinized by Canadian border guards who state that they hope to uncover child pornographers by finding incriminating jpegs on their hard drives. In many cases, the perception of risk and the subsequent invocation of public safety are used as a device for restricting the freedoms of individuals. In this larger context, the ephemeral and

unpredictable experiences offered by WADE are both intimate and emancipatory.

Some of the WADE audience are people who came to the pool with the specific intention of viewing art. Others who happened upon WADE by accident may never attach an “art” label to their experiences that day in the park. Unlike many civic facilities such as benches, litter bins and, even, permanent public art, WADE offers unique experience; hard to categorize, sometimes mind-expanding, always fleeting and difficult to repeat. The art moments in WADE are the moments of interaction.

As Lisa Deanne Smith writes in this catalogue, her small daughter “knows every inch of the Dufferin Grove pool with an experiential depth. She owns it, as all the kids do, in her way.” The same can be said of the art that, for the duration of WADE, wove its way into the fabric of city life.



locations

Charles G. Williams pool (Wabash and Sorauren)
Carr Street pool (Carr and Denison)



contained aquatic element

Atanas Bozdarov + Tomasz Smereka

When I first read a short description of Atanas Bozdarov and Tomasz Smereka's artwork in the 2006 WADE brochure, I circled it as a must-see. Their piece appeared reminiscent of a successful work by Gwen McGregor from WADE's first outing in 2004; McGregor had filled her wading pool with large blocks of blue gelatin. The neighbourhood children loved this simple but magical transformation of the very essence of a wading pool: its water. Bozdarov and Smereka proposed a parallel shift: all of the pool's water would be contained in plastic bags. I imagined hideous stacks of sealed green garbage bags. I couldn't imagine how the public might react to what I conceived of as a version of Toronto's last garbage strike.

I planned to spend the first day of WADE tooling about from pool to pool on my bike. Of course, I didn't get to all of my destinations. This is the great beauty of WADE you get to a pool, you get wet, you get into conversation, you have fun, you have to dry off. Try as you may, you can't stick to a timetable. I arrived to Bozdarov and Smereka's site late in the afternoon, but still

within the event's set hours. The pool was empty. The only person about was the pool attendant, who helpfully explained that the piece was rather short-lived. The water, as it turned out, was contained in small, transparent plastic bags, the size of milk bags. At the start of the day, the pool was duly filled with the bagged water, a strange and wondrous thing to behold according to the attendant. Families arrived, jumped into the pool, some bags burst, everyone splooshed about, and in short order one the fathers initiated a pillow fight with the water bags. Soon, there were no longer any filled bags left. The artists and the attendant then judiciously drained the pool.

I couldn't do WADE the next day, but, determined to see something of Bozdarov and Smereka's piece, I came to their second site early to at least see the set-up. The attendant fetched a hose and the artists established themselves in the middle of the pool with their bags and a number of sealing machines, the kind that my local health food store uses. I helped the artists bag water for a spell, and learned there is a trick to getting



an effective seal: you have to twist the bag just so, and then really bang down on the sealing tape. Soon more volunteers arrived, and we were all standing in a sea of bagged water. Unexpectedly, the effect was a bit creepy; this was not the fun-in-the-sun of McGregor's piece of two summers ago (we were however without any cavorting kids). The bagged water seemed strangely prophylactic, like something we weren't meant to have. I thought of the recent successes of water rights activists combating water's commodification by transnational corporations in Central and South America. Maybe this is a bit of a leap, but questions about our relationship to water resources are in the air. This fall, mainstream Canadian churches have asked their adherents to boycott bottled water. Maybe the pillow-fighting father unwittingly reflected a widely held sentiment: (in the spirit of Robert Frost's poem "Mending Wall") something there is that does not love sealed water.

—John Armstrong



verbal source

Peter Chin + Louis Laberge-Côté

locations

Riverdale Park West pool (Carlton and Parliament)

Dufferin Grove Park pool (Dufferin and Bloor)

On a sultry Sunday afternoon in July, the wading pool in Dufferin Grove Park is full of shrieking, laughing children splashing and plopping in the shallow water. Parents run after squealing toddlers, while those with older children commune with their neighbours, lounging on blankets or leaning against one of the many tall shade trees in the park. The scene is one of joyful chaos, a cacophony of happy sounds dimming the distant traffic noises. There is little evidence of the upcoming dance performance, save for a small sound and photography crew, and the soloist, Louis Laberge-Côté, who is warming up in a secluded spot near the pool.

It takes a few minutes for the organizers to clear the pool; one particularly fleet little body in a diaper almost escapes, splashing surprisingly quickly across the pool before being scooped up by his parent. The crowd settles good-humouredly, not exactly sure of what is about to take place, but curious enough to become willing participants.

Laberge-Côté takes his place in the pool and begins to explain to the audience that this is the story of his life from birth to early adolescence. A masterful dancer, Laberge-Côté—who collaborated on this piece with choreographer Peter Chin—is an equally entertaining

story-teller. Comically, he seems at first a bit addled, and offers as explanation for his confusion the bizarre events which shaped his early years. The children creep closer to the edge of the pool; this is a story of mystery, of confused identity, of absent parents and of ancestors who haunt the present. Laberge-Côté's story unfolds through both words and dance as he moves through the water, at times evoking images of birth, and at others seeming to yearn for arrival at distant shores. The search for identity and self-actualization is timeless and knows no cultural boundaries.

The piece is accessible and entertaining—perfect for this venue—and a wonderful introduction to dance for the many children who watch, enthralled. As Laberge-Côté leaves the pool to sustained applause, the youngsters surge forward to reclaim their space, several of them imitating the movements witnessed just moments before, exploring the language with which they will record their life stories as they journey toward their own distant shores.

—Tara Gonder



everyone in the pool

Leah Decter + Michael Caines

I arrived at Leah Decter and Michael Caines's *Everyone in the Pool* about one hour after set up on the Saturday of the WADE festival. When I had read that pool waders were to "stomp and stir wool within the pool transforming it into felt" I'd expected a wading pool full of water with swirling multi-coloured wool and people marching around like clockwork. I wasn't sure how that could make felt, but being an avid fibre artist (a.k.a. recent knitting addict), I was looking to be a part of the process.

Only the swirling multi-coloured wool part of my fibre fantasy was intact. I was greeted with a much more practical felt manufacturing process. Leah explained the system: a thick layer of dyed and carded wool was laid between two flexible screens—like the bug screens on windows—to be hosed down with water, massaged with soap (which make the individual fibres puff out like velcro) and then stomped to compact the fibres into solid felt.

And it was time to facilitate the fun! Soak. Soap. Stomp, Repeat! Toddlers spread around gobs of sudsy soap. Kids started impromptu stomping races and

record-length sliding skids across the felt. Women rolled up their pants and shared felt crafting stories with the strangers stomping next to them. I raised an eyebrow when a golden retriever tried to get in on the fun. All the while Leah and Michael kept a watchful eye over the felt and directed their garden hose to ensure no section got too soapy or too dry.

The experience was delightful. The wool was soft and squishy under my feet. The water was cool in the hot sun and my Capri pants got wet up to the knees from splashing and jumping around with the kids. While pushing the slippery soap around and through the screens, it was interesting to feel how the felt was gradually coming together.

I enjoyed the feeling of community participation most of all. I rarely find myself in a situation where I am making something tangible in a group of strangers. The warm memory I have of the experience spurs me forward to seek out similar opportunities. Or maybe even make one happen!

—Amy Stewart



location
Christie Pits pool (Christie and Bloor)

locations

Vermont Square Park pool (Palmerston and Vermont)
North Stanley Park pool (King and Strachan)

true reflection

Sandra Gregson

Oh the joys of a Canadian summer! I think this to myself as I climb onto my bike and whirl around the city in search of WADE. First stop for me is Sandra Gregson's piece at Vermont Square Park. I finally find it. But wait, the project has had some difficulties. Sandra is sitting near the pool with her rolls of SuperGrass® (think high-end green plastic carpeting) and describes the installation and transformation of her work.

The artist has planned it out to the tiniest detail: a lovely configuration of false lawn affixed to the floor of the wading pool, speaking to the nature/culture dichotomy while providing some more green space in the city. She researched and sourced the synthetic lawn product, had it delivered to the site and cut to her specifications. The bundles of "grass" are then meticulously laid out—with the help of friends—on the cement bed of the pool and the water is turned on. But the young pool attendants have problems with the chlorination and there is a delay. Parents with children are waiting for the pool, so Sandra removes the lawn from the water and spreads strips of the greenery around the edges, providing a small glimpse of her original idea. Hmm.

Dismayed but not deterred, Sandra repeats the performance on another day, this time in North Stanley Park. At this location, the community of people who come to bathe and relax is smaller. The moms and dads are respectful of the art, questioning and responsive. When I cycle up, Sandra is again sitting on the grass overseeing

a new configuration of her work. Based on yesterday's experience, she has decided to abbreviate the installation. But there is SuperGrass® in part of the pool this time. The artist is happy and so are the children. At one point, the owner of the company that donated the grass product, comes by with family and friends to chat and see the work. They pick up a WADE brochure and go off to see some more inner city pool art. I am struck by the creative courage of this collaboration between artist, community, and commercial enterprise. I sit beside Sandra and partake of her picnic lunch. Munching on organic pita bread, I watch as the kids enjoy some artificial nature and the companionship of someone who cares for their world and wants to make it better. Even the birds are attracted to the green plastic grass. An image that will stick with me in all of this is the ecstatic abandon of a young boy rolling on the artificial turf as if it was his first time in grass. He had the imagination to take the gift for what it was. Joy, like art, is hard to describe, but we know it when we find it.

—Kym Pruesse

roy and silo's gay wading

John Greyson + Margaret Moores

location
Vermont Park pool (Palmerston and Vermont)

The water was absolutely freezing, too freezing, in fact, for my fragile frame to bear. I was thus prevented from watching with any due attention the short video loop playing inside an ice, styrofoam and aluminum foil altar in the centre of the wading pool at Vermont Park. Thankfully, there was plenty of spectacle going on around the altar. One could sit in warmth and dryness—on the pool's sidelines—and take it all in. The pool was filled with dozens of penguins—young and old—expertly crafted from balloons and riding on upturned frisbees. There was also an armada of bobbing tea candles on plastic-wrapped (and doctored) Penguin-brand books, all floating on the glacial water's surface. Due to a pronounced wind that tended to lump all the water-bound inflatable partiers together, the penguins had

to be regularly stewarded in different directions by a motley crew of volunteers. Every so often the murmur of the enchanted crowd of human spectators would be broken by the loud pop of a balloon as it met its doom by drifting too close to one of the festive but deadly flames.

This was an enactment of the long-awaited wedding of Roy and Silo, two male penguin “life partners” at the Central Park Zoo who have even raised their own adopted daughter, Tango. As same-sex marriage is illegal in their home country—and perhaps soon will be once more up here—Greyson and Moores celebrated the matrimony in Canada instead. Those with more robust constitutions than I could stand ankle-deep in the frosty depths to watch a cleverly political and wildly inventive seven-minute video that incorporated a vast

array of material (including nature footage, animation and songs) and cultural references detailing both true and fictional events in the happy couple's story: the penguins' wild bachelor party and bickering over preparations for the big day; the banning of the children's book, *And Tango Makes Three*, based on the penguins' alternative family; the various permutations of the Penguin books logo and the launch of the publisher's line of gay classics; and the injuries sustained by Rufus Wainwright and Annie Liebovitz in a bloody decorative wedding harbour collapse during the couple's much-fussed-over ceremony. Greyson and Moores' whimsical, ornithological, arctic wedding was an opportunity to playfully parody everything from the Christian conservative movement—Stephen Harper is urged by Roy and

Silo to stay away from their big day—that appropriated the film *March of the Penguins* as an example of hetero-sexist “family values;” to the rising tide of rampant gay consumerism and its attendant hungry entrepreneurs that arose when gay marriage was newly legally legitimized; to our increasing fascination with animals and their often queer behaviour, in all senses of the term (Google “tiger piglets” if you don't believe me). In other words, it is a very layered, witty and intelligent project, one that Greyson (and David Wall) followed up a few months later during Toronto's Nuit Blanche with *Roy and Silo's Gay Divorce* at the steamy Harrison Baths.

—Jon Davies

leviathan

Marcia Huyer



locations

Matty Eckler pool (Gerrard and Pape)

Cawthra pool (Yonge and Wellesley)

"We had fun on the Inflatable Kingdom. There were handles you could hold onto. I went way under the wading pool. And we had a tremendous lovely time!"

—Miriam Palmer (four years old)

If Marcia Huyer gave her sculpture a name, I'm not sure I ever knew it. From the moment my daughter Miriam climbed on, it became known as "The Inflatable Kingdom." Or rather, "My Inflatable Kingdom," as in "I loooooove My Inflatable Kingdom" and "My Inflatable Kingdom is SO super!" An amazing array of inflatable toys held together by copious amounts of waterproof glue became, for one quiet Saturday morning, a magical domain of play. It had its creaturely qualities—a serpent-like spiraling tail leading to a towering neck of multi-coloured rings—but its large scale allowed people to clamber on, over and through the sculpture. The children grappling with the outsized dimensions became Lilliputians navigating the daunting body of Gulliver, as persistent and tenacious as fleas on the back of a dog. A giant creature, it had outgrown itself to become a place, a space, a kingdom. Did the kingdom consist of the contained air inside the giant creature? Or the gaps between the many loops and twirls? Was it the complex curved surfaces of its many hollow rings? Huyer had inflated this sculpture beyond the everyday, creating a toy so enormous it was

no longer a toy, but rather an imaginary territory over which some lucky child might reign. But can a kingdom have more than one king or queen? There were obvious moments of competition and rivalry between the children as they vied to ride the tail or to steer the precarious creature around the confines of the wading pool. After a few accidental groundings on the rough surface of the pool's edge, however, it became apparent that teamwork would be required to avoid punctures. The kingdom would not be a kingdom once deflated. After a few hours of playing in the icy waters of the wading pool—and surviving several accidental dunkings—it was time for us to move on. The breeze buffeted the creature from one side of the pool to the other. As we walked down the laneway beside the 519 Church Street Community Centre, and the wading pool, our Inflatable Kingdom receded from view, but not from memory.

—Juliet Palmer



when the front is also the back

Yam Lau

I heard about the spontaneous boat folding later. First, the lamp-lit summer opening night of WADE 2006, and Yam Lau's car opening up completely. He laid it on a patch of grass and flung open all its doors.

Sometimes when I see a car in a strange place I think it's a sales pitch. Yam's car, though, managed to evoke a combination of some kind of family picnic and crime scene parade float. Video footage of waves started to pulse from inside the back seat. The car's body was being wrapped every which way with Barbara Balfour's caution tape, an art multiple that bears the phrase, "Danger—I think I'm falling in love with you." A kiosk with drawers annexed a piece of grass beside the car. Curious WADE-goers and passers-by rolled open the drawers or poked their heads into the car. The transparent acrylic kiosk, created in collaboration with architect Tania Ursomarzo, displayed the artist's custom-made poster of previous WADE projects.

I knew that the car would be travelling to other wading pools around the city as a (fittingly) moveable archive space for WADE, and I imagined it rolling onto the grass

again and again, opening up in the same way. Cars are hard cases for soft insides. But here the artist makes a gesture of offering. He offers the car for new uses.

At one of the pools, Yam showed some people how to fold paper boats by cutting into his WADE posters. Some bystanders got involved and formed a production line. Soon a large number of boats floated in the pool. And then there were no more of Yam's WADE posters left. This was just one of the project's many small gifts.

The car project gave a surface for other artists to exhibit on. It drew connections between new and past WADE projects as a sort of art community service. Finally it was simple, tactile and inviting art.

—Sunny Kerr

waves

Shannon McMullen + Fabian Winkler

The wading pool is not just a place to cool off and splash but also a place of many discoveries. Often I get a glimpse of the world through my daughter, Tyla’s, eyes. It is like seeing through a macro lens. The tar-filled cracks of the pool become tightropes, the water spraying from the middle of the pool is a secret cave that only the brave may enter. Tyla knows every inch of the Dufferin Grove pool with an experiential depth. She owns it, as all the kids do, in her way.

When we arrived that morning, the wading pool was still empty. To the side of the pool McMullen and Winkler were tweaking the buoys that were to be part of their installation. I took notice but Tyla quickly ran off to the sand pit. She kept one eye on the wading pool as she enjoys being one of the first kids in. Her friend Stirling arrived; the two hugged and screeched with abandon.

I watched as the conical shaped buoys were placed in the wading pool. They were white with a red stripe and fixed in place by a weight attached to the bottom. The girls noticed as the pool began to fill and slowed down enough to get slathered with sunscreen and change into bathing suits.

They tiptoed into the freezing cold water, struggling with the impulse to run and splash but held back by the temperature. Then they noticed the floating buoys and were enticed into the deeper water near the centre of the pool. The girls immediately began pushing the buoys, which emitted other-worldly sounds. I loved seeing the look that passed immediately between the two girls as they realized that they were in control of the strange audio. For a while *Waves* became their world.

As the pool filled with children, the sound piece became a social space. The pool is always loud with sounds of water splashing and kids squealing. The electronic notes blended in well, sounding like whales communicating under water. Around the edge of the pool, *Waves* also influenced the adults, as discussions about installation art found a place in their conversation, along with lack of sleep and tips to get the kids to eat more vegetables. The sound created by *Waves* blended in, giving the day more magic.

—Lisa Deanne Smith



locations
Dufferin Grove Park pool (Dufferin and Bloor)
Trinity-Bellwoods Park pool (Queen and Crawford)

deer heads

Hazel Meyer



mobile project touring to all the pools

I remember it was very warm and awkward around my forehead. But the throat was long, and the face was elegant. Everyone took particular care in choosing their own deer, evaluating the fit of each particular handmade head, and looking for a companionability about the eyes. Our antlers made us tall, and we were compelled to stand upright. We were at once ridiculous and regal in our paper-mâché crowns¹—making our unstructured way throughout the streets of downtown Toronto.

At Christie Pits Park and around the Annex, we posed for strangers' snapshots and the comments of locals, shouted from passing cars. Our unlikely herd seemed to have been just what the retirees—rooted to the porches of Clinton Street—have been waiting for years to witness. After decades of predictable comings and goings by neighbours, ladies were moved to call into their houses and alert their husbands to this passing of errant urban wildlife. We walked slowly enough to keep the group together, as Hazel instructed, leaving a track of delight and curiosity in all directions.

On College Street the attention became more overwhelming, and the questions more pronounced. By marvelous coincidence, Meyer's performance was taking place on the same afternoon as the final game of the FIFA World Cup of Soccer. The deer wandered into the heart of Little Italy at the onset of the determining match between Italy and France. Thousands of fans dressed in Azzuri blue and draped in giant flags filled the streets, making them barely passable to the honking, emblazoned cars. People chanted "ITALIA! ITALIA!" and performances collided.

Meyer's deer had complicated the France/Italy dialectic, and proposed a neutral, if absurd, alternative to the omnipresent displays of macho nationalism. Puzzled spectators looked up at our deer heads and stopped to ask us "Which team are you on?" "Are you for Italy?" And most often: "What are you?" to which we replied over and over, the only and most obvious thing we could say: "We're deer."

In *The Big Animal*², a film written by Krzysztof Kieslowski from a story by Kazimierz Orlos, a couple in a small Polish village affectionately adopt a retired circus camel and are subjected to confusion and scorn by their community who can't make sense of the animal's purpose. By resisting any explicit references, Hazel Meyer's eccentric people-animal hybrids migrated through the city with a similarly disarming lack of signification. or purpose.

We stopped for a drink when we were too hot, and for cassava cake and a little dancing at a West Indian barbecue on the way to our final destination of Dufferin Grove Park. We answered questions on the sidewalk and laughed at the uselessness of our answers. We winked and flirted and enjoyed the way our antlers fingered the boughs of all the trees as we passed underneath. We scratched ourselves behind our sweaty, ornamented ears.

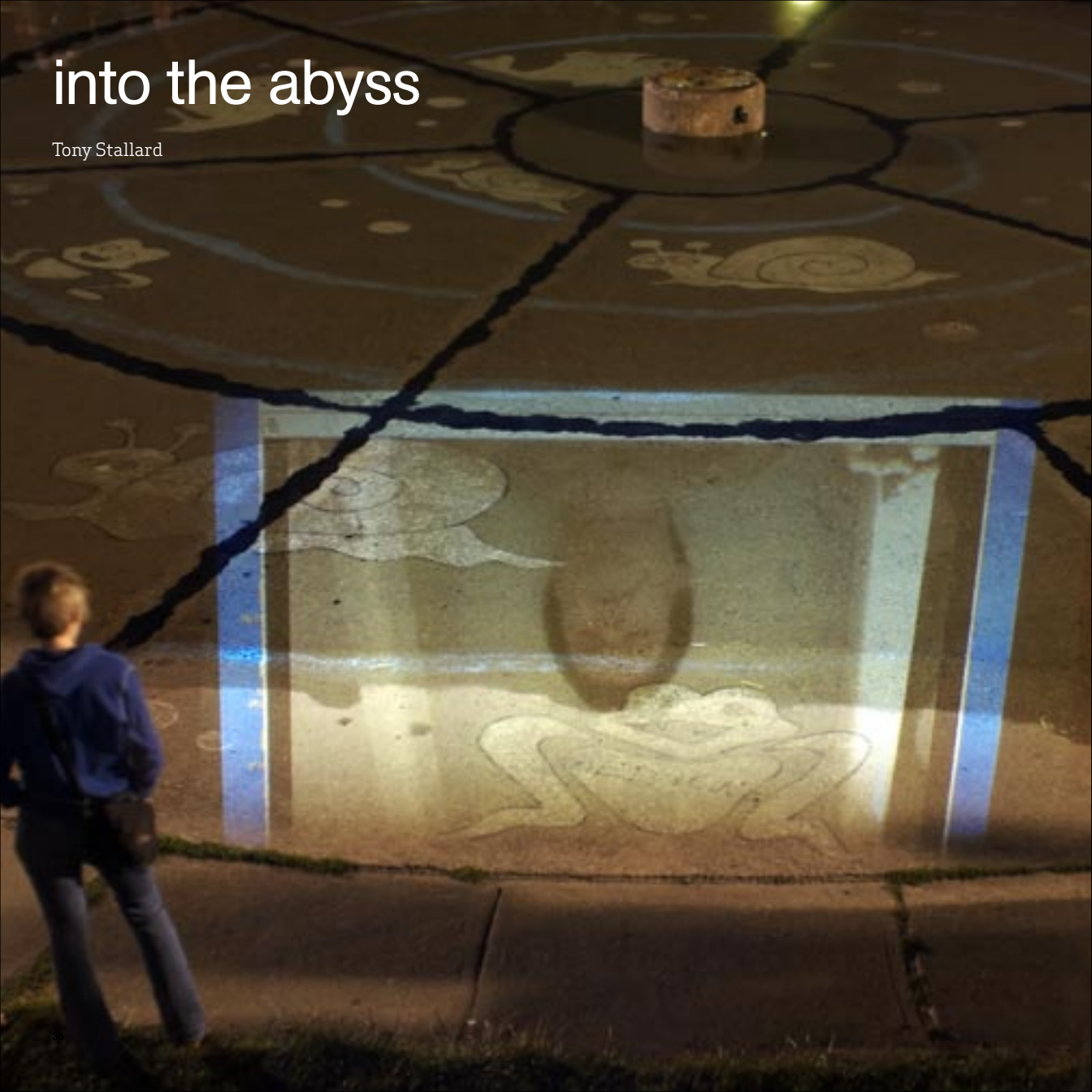
—Diane Borsato

1. In Hazel Meyer's own poetic statement about *Deer Heads*, she recounts the components of her wearable sculptures, and among them "...part regalia, part crown, ½ part water, and 2 parts flour..."

2. *The Big Animal* was directed by Jerzy Stuhr and produced in 2000.

into the abyss

Tony Stallard



location

Bellevue Square Park pool (Kensington Market)

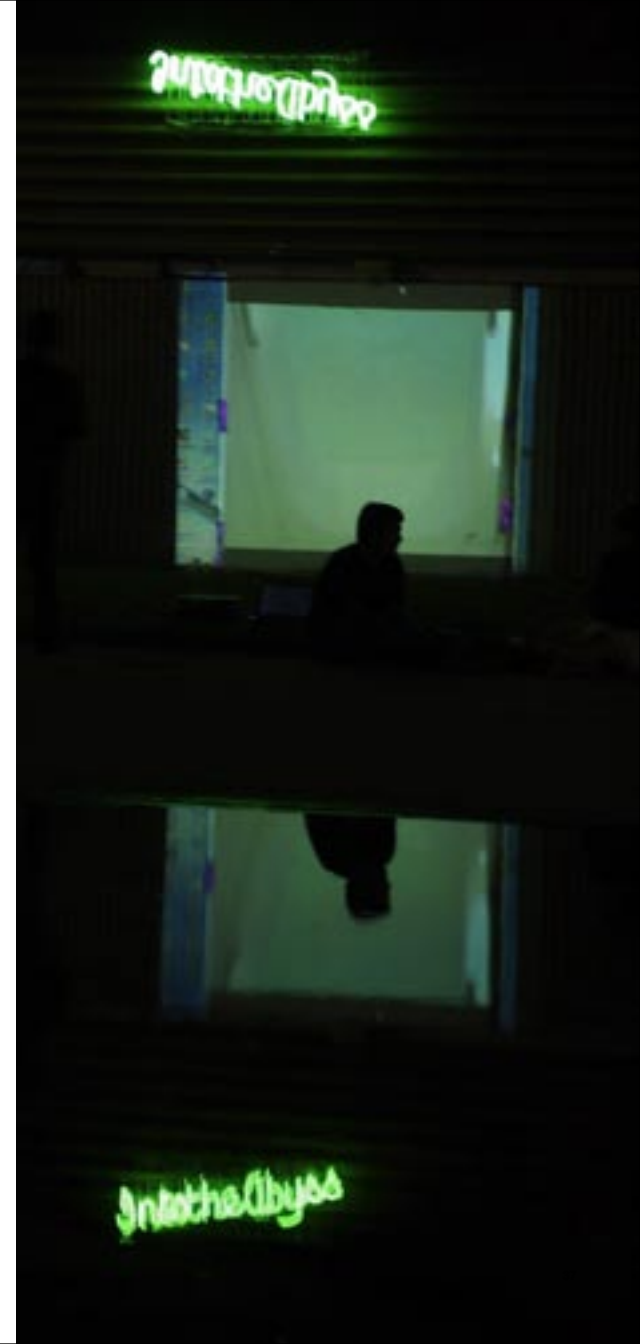
We stop by Bellevue Square Park in Kensington Market on our way to dinner. It is the evening magic hour of a Saturday in July. The sun has just sunk beyond the horizon, the light is fading to grey, the air is gentle. The Market is quiet and uncharacteristically peaceful. There are a few people passing through the park, staying to themselves. A young couple circles the pool with a big, happy dog splashing at the water's edge. A family lounges together on a park bench.

We are introduced to the artist, Tony, and his partner, Kay. We chat. It's their first visit to North America. They seem jet-lagged, disoriented, but excited to be in Toronto. He is a sculptor who makes site-specific installations using light. I wonder when the art is going to happen.

Then I notice, as the sky slowly darkens, a reflection in the pool. Nobody has pointed it out to me. *Into the abyss*: the words unobtrusively float on the surface of the pool's darkening water, as the ripples fade to stillness. The phrase is projected—upside down and backwards—from the grey cinderblock wall of the adjacent city maintenance building, legible only in the water. There is a faint projection on the wall too: a man, the artist, in a bathtub. The words and images emerge as gradually as the evening light itself.

Into the abyss: the effect of the words in contrast to the calm evening is striking, quiet, simple, forceful.

—Hannah Evans



locations

Little Norway pool (Bathurst and Queen's Quay)
Matty Eckler pool (Gerrard and Pape)



sea city

Michele Stanley, Theodor Pelmus, Eugenio Salas

On a warm Saturday evening, my friend and I took our bikes down to Queen's Quay. A faint music beckoned us to turn off the main bike path along the harbour to enter Little Norway park. The dreamy music grew louder, guiding us down to an area we had never visited before. Suddenly, around a bend, we came to wading pool cloaked by a ring of abundantly flowering chestnut trees. We were immediately charmed by this newly discovered environment, but the experience was just beginning.

At the pool, we found many children and adults engrossed in folding white paper into the shape of sailboats. One of the three artists leading the activities guided us to a bench and provided us with the tools to make our own sailboats. We were instructed to write a dream or wish on the paper before folding it. Pool-side, violinist Rick Hyslop continued to play the enchanting music, and dozens more visitors were attracted to the park just as we had been.

As dusk fell, everyone was invited to launch the miniature flotilla of paper ships. Hundreds of sail boats glided silently around the pool. At the same time, a video

was projected onto the water. This was a video-collage of 1960s education films of astronomy and natural science combined with science fiction imaginings of outer space. Invisible on its own, the video was apparent only when sailboats floated into the beam, reflecting glimpses of the cosmic imagery.

In the dark water, the brilliant white ships became swirling constellations, evoking the history of navigation by the stars. Like the sailors of old who headed to unknown and unfathomable destinations, our little sailboats were heading to the land of our dreams.

—Aubrey Reeves

locations

Bellevue Square Park pool (Kensington Market)
Withrow Park pool (Carlaw and Danforth)



purifying roses

Chrysanne Stathacos

Bellevue Square pool, July 8, 2006

Padmasambhava, the second Buddha of our time according to Tibetan tradition, is said to have been born fully enlightened, in the middle of a lake. Elemental spirits, the Nagas, are said to inhabit lakes. They come forth from the lakes in stormy wet weather, but also flowing down rivers and pipes—including those that feed the wading pools of Toronto—to give their blessings.

To make something sacred, create a frame for it. “Circle it thrice,” as Coleridge advised in “Kubla Khan.” The Bellevue Square Park pool is a gently sloping, conical slab of concrete in Kensington Market, a much-loved and well-used downtown neighborhood. On a warm Saturday morning, Chrysanne Stathacos disperses a seemingly endless supply of rose petals into the pool. Quickly, as waders stir the water, the petals float to the circumference of the pool, forming a beautiful crimson crust that waders must step through or over in order to enter the water.



The center of the wading pool is a circular concrete structure, about three feet tall, very phallic, a chunky Siva-lingam surrounded by all those crimson flowers and watery flows. This is also Arte Povera, the industrial geometric concrete of these 1950s public structures eroded and transformed by simple, “natural” processes.

The pool backs onto the children’s playground, and mostly what I find here is a reason to play. The Saturday afternoon crowd flows by with shopping bags. Kids who do not yet know that all pools aren’t filled with petals run through the water. Adults take off their clothes. A couple sits and meditates neck high in the water as the sun above them burns their faces. I like the way the petals feel in my hands. They are tasty too, like endives.

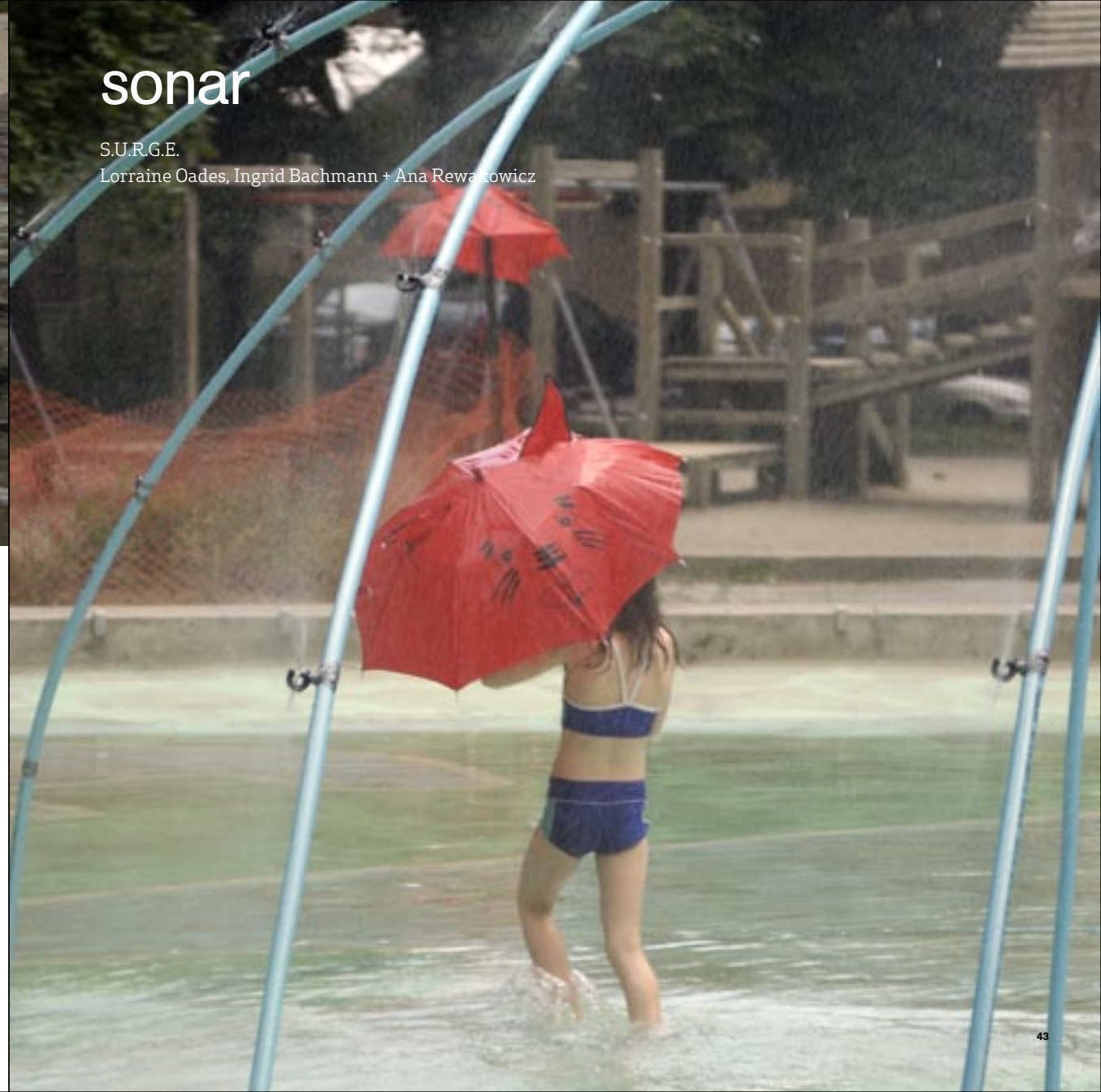
The water is drained at 4 p.m. leaving sacred debris, soggy petals which we pick up by the handful. The sun dries them quickly and they are taken up by the wind. Walking home from a bar across the park several weeks later, I find petals under trees at the far side of the park. People are making out and smoking. The park has been blessed.

—Marcus Boon

sonar

S.U.R.G.E.

Lorraine Oades, Ingrid Bachmann + Ana Rewakowicz



It was midmorning when we descended on Grange Park from the north-west. Adorned with Hazel Meyer’s marvellous papier-mâché deer heads [see pg. XX], our herd broke into a gallop, veering off the path and across the grass. Our next “watering hole” was within view and earshot. Off came my sandals. Streaming into my ears were the soundbites of a lively playground—children playing, objects clanging—but the park was nearly empty.

Toe-deep. A small dome, no more than a skeleton of tubes with valves, rose from the pool’s centre, giving off the faintest misty glow. Ankle-deep. I began my approach, picking up a floating red umbrella en route. Knee-deep. The hypnotic mix of sounds—chirps? yelps?—set the stage for memories rising to the surface. Suddenly I was not only in a twenty-six-year-old in Toronto, but also a four-year-old in the playground of my childhood, carefree as a galloping deer. I hovered there at the mist’s periphery, sheltered by the structure’s tiny sonic symphony from the outside world.

Of course, the temptation to pass underneath the spray could not be dodged. In t-shirt and shorts, I felt truly overdressed for the occasion. I squinted across, perked

my ears—a swing chain’s squeak? a shovel scooping sand?—and entered the blur.

The lightest possible submersion, from air into mist. New sounds—the valves’ hiss, my splashing shins—mixed with the rest as I navigated between the tubes. The umbrella was more comical than practical, protecting my deer’s head but not my own. Every pore of exposed skin tingled. And, like someone playing in a backyard—where the dual challenge is both ceremoniously avoiding and meeting the spray—I quickly leapt to safety out the other side.

Damp, but evaporating nicely. Sitting at the pool’s edge, I fell into conversation with a woman my age who, as it turns out, spent her early childhood in the same tiny hometown where I grew up. Although we did not remember each other, I drifted back to those blurriest of years, and to the streets, parks and wading pools our four-year-old selves, perhaps at one point shared. As we reminisced, the soundtrack—a bicycle’s click? a dog’s bark?—continued through its subtly changing loops, while passers by scampered in and out of the mist.

—Steven Chodoriwsky





Trinity Bellwoods pool (Queen and Crawford)
Charles G. Williams pool (Wabash and Sorauren)

small cascade for a large city

Nick Tobier

When we got to stay home from school with the flu or fever we watched the big Ester Williams Hollywood musicals, which even then were already things from the past. Thinking back to the spectacle of those girls in the pool, their big creamy limbs and smiles cresting the water's surface, evokes pleasure (after all we were off school and indulging in television movie matinees!). We cannot remember the plot of any of those movies, just fragments of images combined with a sense of pleasure and nostalgia. *Small Cascade for a Large City* tugs on this mix of emotions and memory.

For Nick Tobier, the performance artist who designed, directed, and created *Small Cascade*, the process of making the piece was "great." In addition to conceiving the performance, costumes, and quirky pool equipment, he also created a suite of drawings for the big group tableaux which occur at the beginning and end of the piece.

Our viewing process was also pretty great. We arrived at the wading pool—tucked behind a warehouse on Sorauren Avenue—a little early. It was July and hot. France and Italy were locked into the final game of the World Cup. Children splashed in the pool as parents watched and chatted with each other. The pool was one of the older concrete kinds, longer than wide, and deeper by a few centimeters at one end. An interesting

assortment of ducky-yellow pool equipment circled its edge. Being two adult women without children we wondered awkwardly what to do with ourselves.

Then children were herded out of the pool and dried off while a cast of workers in blue overalls and yellow hard hats assembled at the lip of the deep end. Someone flicked a switch and the boom box under a tree began to play, instantly transforming the scene. The workmen and women paused at the pool's edge, and then, on cue, a single worker stepped into the water with one of the pool equipment tools in hand. He began to move. Then another worker stepped into the water and then another, and another. Each their own pool tool. Each exuberantly executed a repetitive set of movements, distinctive to that performer. Sometimes they moved in unison. At other times different actions intertwined, forming intricate patterns, culminating in a large Hollywood-style fountain tableaux.

We laugh. We clap. The children in their bathing suits clap before heading back into the pool. Our pleasure with this live and public cascade keeps our memory of Ester in good company.

—Tegan Smith and Kryss Verrall

acknowledgements

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projects

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Christie Pearson is an artist, architect, and writer. Her collaborations with choreographers, writers, composers, visual artists and performers produce challenging interdisciplinary events, performances and installations. She has helped design award-winning urban plans, parks and community centres, and is to be found around bath houses and swimming pools in Toronto and abroad.

Sandra Rechico is a Toronto artist whose work investigates urban space through maps. Her work has been exhibited across Canada and abroad. Her exhibitions have been featured in numerous publications and she has participated in a number of international residencies. Rechico is an Assistant Professor at the University of Guelph.

Ingrid Bachmann (www.ingridbachmann.com) is an interdisciplinary artist who explores the complicated relationship between the material and virtual realms. Bachmann uses redundant, as well as new technologies, to create generative and interactive artworks, many of which are site-specific. She is an Associate Professor in Studio Arts at Concordia University in Montréal, Quebec.

Michael Caines is a Toronto-based artist working in drawing, painting, film, video and sculptural installation. His paintings have been exhibited in public and private galleries in Canada and the USA. His films and videos have been screened worldwide.

Peter Chin is a multidisciplinary artist born in Jamaica and based in Toronto. He lived in Indonesia in the 1990s, and continues to work and research in South East Asia. He is the recipient of numerous prestigious awards and has created work for many dance companies in Canada including the Toronto Dance Theatre, Dancemakers and Chan Hon Goh of the National Ballet of Canada. His work has been presented worldwide.

Leah Decter's practice is focused on large-scale video and sculptural installations which have been exhibited nationally. Her work has been featured in numerous Canadian publications. Decter is currently collaborating on several projects with Toronto artist Michael Caines. She is currently based in Winnipeg.

Sandra Gregson works with drawing, sculpture and video, often combining these into installations. She has exhibited nationally and resides in Toronto. Her work can be viewed at www.ccca.ca and her videos are distributed through www.vtape.org.

John Greyson is an award-winning Toronto film/video artist, whose shorts, features and installations include *Fig Trees*, *Proteus*, *Unout*, and *Zero Patience*, among others. He is co-editor of *Queer Looks*, (Routledge, 1993), author of *Urinal and Other Stories* (Power Plant/Art Metropole, 1993), and he has an extensive publication history. Greyson is an Assistant Professor in Film at York University.

Marcia Huyer has been working with the medium of inflation since 2003. She uses this medium metaphorically to bring up cultural conditions of lost and false utopic ideals. Huyer's internationally exhibited installations welcome the spectator to be turned on by their questionable beauty, momentarily capturing the viewer from time by extending an alternative place of imagination and contemplation. Marcia Huyer currently lives in Victoria, British Columbia.

Louis Laberge-Côté is a Toronto-based dancer, choreographer and teacher. A member of Toronto Dance Theatre since 1999, he also has a very active career as an independent, touring in North America, Europe, and Asia. He has been teaching for numerous schools

and studios and his choreographic works have been presented across the country.

Yam Lau's work focuses on the exploration of new expressions and presentations of pictorial space in diverse media including painting, writing, animation and the Internet. He publishes regularly on art and design and has exhibited widely across Canada and Europe. He currently teaches at York University.

Shannon McMullen is a PhD candidate at the University of California, San Diego, in the Department of Sociology. She is studying the politics and culture of the redevelopment of steel and coal brownfields in the Ruhr District during the International Building Exhibition, Emscher Park. McMullen is a Visiting Scholar in the Department of Visual and Performing Arts, Purdue University.

Hazel Meyer resides in Montréal. With a background in textiles and performance, she combines various elements of costume, embellishment, and athletics to create projects both in defiance and celebration of social aesthetics. These projects have been shown in galleries and festivals across Canada, though she prefers city streets, football fields and the outsides of coats for her projects' dissemination.

Margaret Moores is a video maker and conceptual artist currently residing in Toronto. Her film and video work has been exhibited nationally and internationally, and

it has been the subject of retrospectives by the British Film Institute and the Melbourne Lesbian Film and Video Festival. Her documentary and narrative work often touches upon the themes of art and activism, lesbian sexuality, public spaces, architecture and strange occurrences.

Lorraine Oades is a visual artist, curator and educator. She has constructed a large body of work that investigates the nature of vernacular materials and modes of expression in which to (re)consider personal, gendered, and historical relationships to the world around us. Site-specificity and interaction are of primary importance in her art practice. She teaches in the Studio Arts Programme at Concordia University, Montréal, Québec.

Theo Pelmus immigrated from Romania to Toronto in 2003, starting collaborations with local artists while at the same time maintaining working partnerships with artists in Romania. He now lives in Ottawa where he continues his projects based on ideas of self representation, hybridization and art as a common satellite.

Ana Rewakowicz (www.rewana.com) is an interdisciplinary artist and researcher born in Poland, of Ukrainian origin, now living and working in Montréal. She works with inflatables and explores relations between temporal, portable architecture, the body and the environment. Her inflatable clothes, site-specific and video installations, as well as public interventions

have been exhibited and experienced internationally.

Tomasz Smereka is an installation artist from Wroclaw, Poland. He currently lives and works in the suburban extensions of Toronto. Smereka studied at the University of Toronto and the Sheridan Institute. Recently his work has been exhibited at the Blackwood Gallery and Xspace in Toronto.

Chrysanne Stathacos is a multi-media artist and educator whose art works and interactive public art projects have travelled to museums, public spaces and contemporary art galleries on four continents. Her art practice makes connections between ritual actions and contemporary performance/installation art to create cross-cultural hybrid works that engage the public by giving them the opportunity to have direct participation.

Fabian Winkler creates interactive installations and video works in which he explores the aesthetic potential and the cultural implications of seemingly well-known artifacts through the use of new technologies. Winkler's work has been widely exhibited internationally. He is currently developing a programme in electronic and time based art at Purdue University where he is an Assistant Professor.



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