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straight edge to include dates of significant military interventions in Turkey's history and dates of the foundation of the Turkish Republic.

While Ereğ reclaims the ruler's strict form, the curators have attempted to reclaim the gallery—in many ways an architectural extrusion of the modernist grid—as a vehicle for human expression and political discourse. The varied shapes and heights of the enclosures—separated from one another so that an intricate network of passageways emerged in the spaces between—referenced the small clusters of houses and buildings found in architect Ryue Nishizawa's native Japan, but also mimicked Istanbul's patchwork of paths and forms, which are evidence of the city's long and contested history. The corrugated metal sheets that supported the walls were also familiar; these are typically used as barriers for construction in the city. The locally sourced partitions were clever and appropriate and served to support an exhibition that reinforced the importance of gallery walls.

While these subtly evocative spaces effectively delivered and directed the audience to carefully planned and executed interventions by artists, little was done to acknowledge the impact of the shifting architecture of informational practices on political and artistic discourse. Given that this was a biennial that, by every indication, wanted to ask what we might learn from a re-examination of well-worn modes and methods, this criticism may be unfounded. It is just that the few pieces that did manage to address the impact of digital culture (Mungo Thomson's

Untitled (TIME) [2010], which projects flickering images of all of the covers of *TIME* Magazine through time; and Shuruq Harb's *A Book of Signatures* [2009], a projection of the scanned signatures of men named Mohammed in Palestine displayed inside the book containing the signatures that was kept closed beside a vitrine) came across as minuscule offerings that managed only to introduce the impact digitization and its attendant automatisms have had on the aesthetics and poetics that shape personal, historical and public memory. This certainly should not be overlooked in future Biennials. Although new-media works, public interventions and work displayed outside of the gallery are often criticized for lacking aesthetic and formal rigour, curators should see this as a challenge to be met, not as a danger to be avoided.

At this year's Biennial, the curators attempted to construct an environment that expressed their political concerns and forms without the distractions of unpredictable and unintended contextualizations, which they certainly achieved. And although this does not, and should not, in any way, mark the end of more experimental forms of presentation, it does give us pause to consider the continued efficacy and importance of developing and working within well-established modernist forms.

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Rural Readymade

Confederation Centre of the Arts,
Charlottetown, PEI
May 28 – October 9, 2011

by Jane Affleck

The concept of the readymade is hardly new to the art world. Art students—if not your average gallery-goer—learn about Duchamp's urinal shortly after discovering that mixing Cadmium red and Naples yellow produces tangerine. Despite his virtuoso skill in signing "R. Mutt" on a urinal and drawing facial hair on a postcard of the *Mona Lisa*, I wonder if Duchamp could have hit the side of a barn door with a paintball gun if his life depended on it.

Among the works of the 10 artists comprising the *Rural Readymade* exhibition at the Confederation Centre, nary a barn door could be found (though a couple of rustic chairs did feature). Most of the pieces displayed present a new twist on the readymade or the rural; the most thought-provoking accomplish both. Not all the works, however, are entirely successful.

New Brunswick-based Janice Wright Cheney's *Coy Wolves* (2010) does speak to the show's two underlying propositions, though the piece is arguably more rural than readymade. Some effort went into coating three taxidermy forms in caramel

and chocolate brocade and these hybrids (coyote + wolf) make vamp eyes through lace veils, with paws, reminiscent of antique sofa legs, stepping upon vintage hardcover books.

The diorama plays at domestication and domesticity: leg forms once wild but appropriated and resituated within the definitive household space—the parlour—are here reclaimed but along with certain trappings: the accessories worn by the breed

of woman inhabiting those parlours. The suggestion is that veils are to that breed of woman what the paw/leg form is to the sofa: an artifice. Identity, then, including the careful civility constructed by our pioneering forebears, which we now take for granted, is a kind of readymade: there for the taking and waiting to be named. Or renamed, as the case may be.

Just beyond *Coy Wolves* is the installation by Adriana Kuiper and Ryan Suter,



Clint Neufeld, *Trailer Queen*, 2010, ceramic, vinyl, wood, 81.3 cm × 76 cm × 1.12 m.
IMAGE COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

also New Brunswickers. It beckons—and not just because of the clunky plywood phonograph horn atop an old truck cab. As you approach, the cab’s windows light up and a song plays: Crystal Gayle’s “Wrong Road Again,” which is also the work’s title. The didactic panel describes it as a “makeshift hideout.” But who is hiding from what, and why so ineffectually? True, the windows are frosted, but the blaring song and pulsing light draw more attention than they ward off. There’s further irony: the song may lament wrong roads, but with no wheels, getting on any road is next to impossible. Thus the piece also embodies a feeling often experienced by young people growing up in rural areas: that they’ll never be able to leave.

But there may be inherent challenges in merging this do-it-yourself spirit with the Duchampian variety of art. If so, they come to light in the photographs by Eryn Foster. The product of one of her *New Canadian Pilgrimages*, this array of colour snapshots of the back roads of PEI merely reinforce the clichéd notions many city-dwellers already have about their country-mice cousins: broken, rusted swing sets; the requisite shambling trailer; a random patch of weeds sufficing as a garden—it must be true we’re too poor to maintain what little we do own.

As one of my painting instructors once said to me in a one-on-one critique, “You don’t have to paint *like* the folk to paint the folk.” But why not take photos of “the folk,” or at least their things, in the manner of the folk? That might, after all, address the readymade aspect of the exhibition. So then, why not shoot with little regard to focus, lighting or composition?

Arguably, because that results in the likes of several snapshots of improvised mailboxes—the kind at the end of a 500-metre driveway, replacing the store-bought one that fell victim to the snowplow or a truck full of rednecks with a baseball bat. But one such composition captures only half of an empty kitty-litter bucket turned on its side and affixed to a piece of plywood—no post, no context. To those unversed in the necessity of cobbling together a replacement mailbox, it’s unlikely these examples would even be recognized as such, given the framing. Part of the problem may lie in the photographic mediation; perhaps Foster would have better served the exhibition’s theme had she “borrowed” any of the objects she photographed and placed them directly in the gallery.

There are a couple of engaging outliers: the circle fortress built from cords of firewood, with a wonky lintel doorway; the orange work glove stuck on a post, intriguing with its semiotic ambiguity—

halt or hello? But, on the whole, the photos tell only half the story. These scenes exist; Foster has the photos to prove it. However, familiar with the back roads of PEI myself, I know there are as many freshly painted steps as duct-taped, ramshackle whatnots. Holding to so stringent a definition of “rural” is as limiting as holding to the institutionalized definition of “art” that Duchamp sought to deconstruct, no?

Other artists’ contributions are noteworthy: in particular, the exquisitely rendered ceramic motors and carburetors by Clint Neufeld. On the surface, resembling fine china or wedding cakes, they initiate a subtle dialogue between masculine and feminine rural identities: the delicacy of

the white and sea-foam glazes and floral appliqués vies with the forms’ bulk and weight. That one of the pieces is placed on a settee—the kind with coy-wolf legs—makes the formal opposition all the more apt.

And sure, the drive-in screens and billboards featured in Doug Lewis’ photographs can be viewed as readymades—but are the photos themselves? Perhaps of all the exhibition’s pieces, these photos best encapsulate the show’s theme: they are tabula rasa by proxy, waiting for an idea to be projected, ready for a hand holding a can of black spray paint to tag a signature or maybe a mustache and a goatee.

→ Jane Affleck teaches writing at NSCAD University.



Laurel Woodcock: Jump Cuts

University of Waterloo Art Gallery, Waterloo, Ontario
September 15 – October 29, 2011

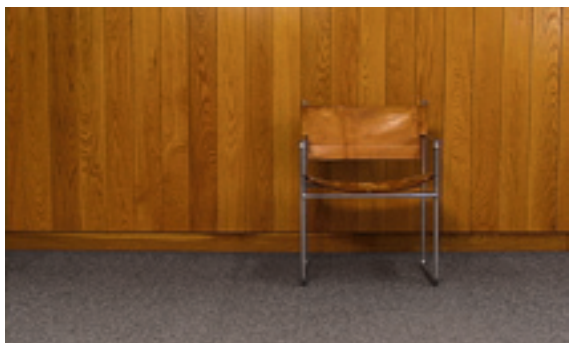
by Crystal Mowry

The “jump cut” is all about shooting a singular subject with minor variances in the camera angle. As an editorial act, it is a means to create subtle disruptions in the experience of watching a single narrative trajectory. Thus, it seems fitting that Laurel Woodcock’s tightly edited exhibition of work from the last eight years borrows its title from the cinematic lexicon. Through careful curation by UWAG’s Director/Curator Ivan Jurakic and a keen sense of context, *Jump Cuts* offers various examples of Woodcock’s multifaceted practice.

Explicit references to cinematic history and the double-edged sword of genre¹ have shaped much of Woodcock’s work which predates the range of this exhibition. Woven into this work is the artist’s own complicated relationship with genre as both structure and symbol of belonging. Though cinematic genres might serve to organize tropes, the strategies for restaging said tropes can create opportunities for criticality or even subversion. Woodcock’s

Laurel Woodcock, *stickies*, 2011, steel, yellow car paint, screws, magnets
(3 sizes: 7.6 cm × 7.6 cm, 3.8 cm × 5.1 cm, 1.4 cm × 5.1 cm, each size), edition of 15.
PHOTO: TONI HAFKENSCHIED; IMAGE COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

practice in the past decade has expanded beyond installations that are anchored by their video components. Text, often in the form of unauthored platitudes or fugitive punctuation rendered in laser-cut aluminum and neon, now round out Woodcock's body of work. The sentiment courted by Woodcock in that early work, however, persists in much of her current work.



At first blush, one might look at Woodcock's works as a series of clever visual one-liners crafted by an absentee—or in certain critical circles, “dead”—author. Woodcock's one-liners, however, could be seen as succinct conveyances of our complicated relationship with cliché and communication. In the last decade virtually every written discussion of Woodcock's practice has cited its connection to the now familiar blend of the process and poetics (and occasionally sentimentalism) gathered under the rubric of Romantic Conceptualism.² They are pitch-perfect in their ability to convey our complicated relationship with clichés and communication. The artist's work is often linked to Romantic Conceptualism and one of that movement's key artists, Bas Jan Ader, makes a cameo appearance in the lone print work in the exhibition. *Untitled (playlist for Bas Jan Ader)* is a list of 41 songs, represented by their title and respective performer, rendered in blue foil sans-serif font on an expanse of white paper. Part paen to the artist and part cheeky nod to the sentimental culture surrounding the creation of mix-tapes, *untitled* conveys Woodcock's aptitude for combining sincerity and humour with the language of minimalism.

Within the context of this exhibition, one gets a sense of a series of minor shifts that have led Woodcock's work towards more concise gestures, often highlighting the language of banal directives and ubiquitous declarations. In one of the earliest works in the exhibition, *wish you were here* (2003/2004/2011), Woodcock offers evidence of an ephemeral act of sentimentality writ large in the sky. During the month of September, Woodcock hired an airplane to circle the sky above the University of Waterloo's campus trailing a red banner with the phrase “WISH YOU WERE HERE.” It is worth noting that one of the flights occurred during the university's convocation weekend when returning graduates were likely to be feeling a mix of longing and detachment. At once a banal cliché and conceptual dismantling of methods of communication, the work's strength is in the vagueness of its declaration. The phrase, which could be understood as belonging to both the romance of some form of elsewhere and the nostalgia evoked by popular music, is rendered inert and illegible when the banner's letters are brought into the “here” of the gallery space.

Opposite the limp banner letters is *done* (2008), one of Woodcock's works in which punctuation marks or related symbols serve as the text. Here, the artist invites the notion of progress in one of its most quotidian manifestations: a checkmark. But Woodcock's symbol is no paltry graphic gesture. Fabricated with laser-cut Plexiglas and red adhesive vinyl, it seems to float against the wall, light bouncing off its highly polished edges. Most importantly, this luminescent checkmark is unmoored from any specific achievement.

Somehow that approval of something completely ambiguous (at least in the mind of the viewer) works in Woodcock's favour.

In other instances, the undefinable seems to overlap with a sense of anticipation. In the video *location shoot* (2003), we see a series of brief, static shots of various chairs against “found” locations: a woven lawn chair against a garage door, a modernist leather and chrome side chair against a similarly hued wall of wood panelling—and so on. In each shot, the chair is just right of centre, facing the camera, as if awaiting the entry of a subject from the left. There is a quality to *location shoot* that seems intentionally unfinished, as though it is the artist's ongoing archive of arrival backdrops. The well-worn modernist furniture as both subject and site injects aspiration and failed idealism into the work. It is subtle, but Woodcock effectively co-opts the “less is more” maxim popularized—but appropriately, not coined—by the iconic Mies van der Rohe.

It only requires a quick glance around *Jump Cuts* to recognize that the works in the show all share, if only in some small measure, references to the highlighting or isolation of important information. And yet Woodcock conflates strategies of identifying the exceptional with content that is intentionally undefined. *stickies* (2011) are a series of small steel sheets, all blank, all painted that recognizable canary yellow that is associated with the Post-it® brand. Differently sized and turned slightly upward, Woodcock's *stickies* are convincing proxies for the real thing. Still, they are more than an exercise in effective mimetics: their placement throughout the gallery seems arbitrary, like the real ones that might have been left over during the process of installing the exhibition, waiting to receive directives from the artist, or even the curator. Their blankness, more than any conceivable inscription, tells us more about a collective desire to define the exceptional or, at the very least, something memorable. Like monuments to the mundane, they mark the transformation of the ephemeral reminder to something concrete.

→ Crystal Mowry is an artist and curator based in Cambridge, Ontario.

1 For a thorough illustration of the evolution of genre films, with a particular emphasis on musicals, see Leo Baudy's excerpted “Genre: The Conventions of Connection” in *Film Theory and Criticism* ed. Gerald Mast and Marshall Cohen (New York, London: Oxford Press, 1979), 443–463.

2 For an early, oft-cited introduction to Romantic Conceptualism, see Jörg Heiser, “Emotional Rescue,” *Frieze Magazine* no. 71, November–December 2002, p. 70–75. Heiser's article is anchored by an extensive discussion of Bas Jan Ader's work.

In Deed: Certificates of Authenticity In Art

Fondazione Bevilacqua La Masa, Venice
October 14 – November 6, 2011

by Alice Dixon

Amidst the wonder and spectacle of contemporary art on display in the City of Bridges for the 54th Venice Biennale, a spare and elegant exhibition on certificates of authenticity in la Galleria di Piazza San Marco of the Fondazione Bevilacqua La Masa provided an interesting counterpoint to some of the official programmes. *In Deed: Certificates of Authenticity In Art* shifted the focus from the spectacle of art to the speculation in art, demonstrating how authorship and value are inextricably linked, and conveying the diverse approaches artists have taken to the commodification of their work.