



ANDREW FORSTER *Duet* (still)
2008 Video installation 59 min

themselves, which are structured by cyclical repetition. The performers' isolation mirrors our own, their frustration proportionate to our desire to grasp or exert control over the work of art.

Forster's work takes the form of a narrative that fails to narrate, of time caught in a loop. The ensuing sense of remoteness asks us to rethink the nature of our attachment to the other—an ambitious but rewarding prospect. **STEPHEN HORNE**

If We Can't Get It Together

THE POWER PLANT, TORONTO

In the face of internationalization, political volatility and mass migration, identities—and the communities to which they belong—have become more fluid than ever. Looking to artists who explore experimental and imagined social formations, the German critic and curator Nina Möntmann considers the disharmonies and unities that are central to collective organization in the exhibition "If We Can't Get It Together."

Central to the show are works that draw attention to the subversive potential of social networks. In *Khirkeeyaan* (2006) Shaina Anand uses cheap surveillance technology to create an open-circuit network and feedback interface between various members of a New Delhi neighbourhood. The resulting seven videos include simultaneous conversations among four different groups: female caretakers who rarely leave their premises alone; salon and grocery-

HAEGUE YANG *Domestics of Community—Version Toronto* 2008 Aluminum venetian blinds, scent dispensers, fan, freezer, water bottles, hot pad and infrared heater
COURTESY THE ARTIST/SUSANNE VEHMETTER LOS ANGELES PROJECTS
PHOTO RAFAEL GOLDCHAIN



store patrons and owners; teenagers and kids; and sweatshop workers. Their interactions range from supportive and humorous to hostile and disturbing, revealing tensions of caste, class, gender and local geopolitics. Kajsja Dahlberg's video *You Must Not Do That/You Must Do That* (2008) records the dismantling of a Danish separatist women's camp, and is accompanied by an etched-glass version of a signed contract between the women of the camp and the artist. The video and contract illustrate the mobilization of gender-based collective agency outside of existing political frameworks.

Among a number of works that emphasize activism are several pieces that reframe collective activities through the fictional. Egle Budvytyte's video work is a faux documentary that describes a utopian society named Secta, whose members are "always on time" and have adopted bizarre public rituals such as walking backwards up escalators. Haegue Yang's piece *Domestics of Community—Version Toronto* (2008) simulates the lights, sounds, scents and wind of the city using venetian blinds, a freezer, a fan, heaters and scent emitters in order to allegorize the social production of public and private space. By overtly manufacturing the ordinary, these pieces bring to light the absurdity of the everyday codes that have come to define community living.

The exhibition also includes a number of Canadian artists whose works engage with the unrealized ideals of collective action. *Gloomy Sunday* (2006), by the Berlin-based duo Hadley + Maxwell, is a video reconstruction of a photograph of a student slain during the protests at Kent State University in 1970. In reconsidering the ghosts of Kent State, the artists remind viewers of the broken dreams of mass mobilization. In a more self-reflexive vein, Luis Jacob presents *Shining* (2008), a sculpture of a solitary swan that raises the question of the difficulties of individual recognition in the context of the shared language of artistic collaboration.

The show emphasizes the urgent need to revise definitions of community in order to recognize new forms of public activism. By bringing together a range of international artists whose works consider collectivity, this show reveals the possibilities and potential shortcomings of social agency, reminding us what it really means to get it together. **TATIANA MELLEMA**

Eli Bornowsky

BLANKET CONTEMPORARY ART, VANCOUVER

Eli Bornowsky claims to have arrived at abstract painting backwards. Neither the depictive arts in general nor the history of abstraction in particular initially concerned him. Instead, it was music (as diverse as Autechre, La Monte Young and Ornette Coleman) that brought him to abstraction. Bornowsky's new series at Blanket Contemporary Art consists of groups of circles executed in goauche on paper and oil on canvas. Bornowsky wanted to make visual work that has the same effect as music; if one lets them, these works exhibit a sustained play between shapes and colours, a play similar to that in music.

The relationship in visual art between music and

abstraction is old. Wassily Kandinsky attempted to represent music visually a hundred years ago, but what Bornowsky does bears only the most superficial affinity to Kandinsky. Although Bornowsky makes abstract paintings, and is interested in music, his work is unlike Kandinsky's or even Mondrian's, because Bornowsky does not try to *represent* music. Instead, he tries to make pictures that might operate like music, creating a similar experience. There are no expressive brush strokes here to represent an arpeggio, no colour to symbolize tone.

In most of the paintings, a series of circles frames a series of smaller circles, with each smaller circle corresponding in colour to a larger one. Each is also slightly different in terms of the application of oil paint or gouache. The more time one gives to these works (the more one looks at them—these are, after all, paintings which ask to be *looked at*), the more they reveal. These works trust viewers to take their time. They present themselves candidly, without pretense or demands. The repetition they contain might warn of their being dull, but one is reminded of John Cage's injunction: if one finds something boring, consider it until it isn't.

The arrangements of circles have been painted in various consistencies. As such, the paintings are meditations on difference and repetition. Each circle is subtly different from the others: in the way the paint is applied, the subtle variations of colour, even the size of the circles and how circles painted with the same pigment vary. Some pictures have more obvious variances: some have three white circles, or three black plus one brown circle, creating an imbalance in the compositional symmetry. The more one looks at the paintings, the more ways one discovers to look at them, to contemplate their differences.

Variation encourages the eye to play back and forth across the painting's surface, examining differences, and that play affords an experience similar to listening to music. The mind moves. **AARON PECK**

Synesthesia: Art and the Mind

McMASTER MUSEUM OF ART, HAMILTON

Presented in collaboration with McMaster's Department of Psychology, Neuroscience and Behaviour, the exhibition "Synesthesia: Art and the Mind" aims to contextualize artists and their works in terms of this half-understood term referring to the joining of the senses. The paintings and drawings gathered for the show—some by known synesthetes, others by artists tangentially linked to the phenomenon—are united by visual commonalities outlined in the scientist Heinrich Klüver's assessment of "form constants": a specific set of recurring shapes and lines.

While Klüver's documented efforts to pin down synesthetic symptoms in concrete terms are included in this show, "Synesthesia" remains an open project, one that invites the viewer to freely associate the myriad curving gestures and affinities for landscape present in the works while highlighting the difficulty of identifying synesthesia at a time when the scale and nature of the phenomenon remains uncertain.

This search for legitimacy is an acknowledgement



ELI BORNOWSKY *Untitled*
2008 Gouache on paper
73.7 x 73.7 cm

Untitled 2008 Gouache on
paper 73.7 x 73.7 cm

