EXHUME TO CONSUME
BLASPHEMY MADE FLESH
ANCESTRAL NECROSODOMY
BIRTH BENEATH EARTH
SPIRITUAL AMPUTATION
VOMITORIUM CONVULSIONS
OCCULT BLOOD EXCREMENT
TRIUMPHANT SECRETIONS
ENDLESS BLEEDING JOURNEY
DIRTY INFAMOUS PAGAN FOG
SUCK MY UNHOLY VOMIT
MALIGNANT INCEPTION
AWAKENED BY IMPURITY
DESTROY SACRED WORDS

HOME THOUGHTS

» BRUCE BAUGH

Home is where the heart is
Home is so remote
Home is some emotion
Sticking in my throat
Lets go to your place
» Lena Lovich

. . .

Home, we are told, is something good and desirable. It's good to "feel at home"; restaurants still (implausibly) advertise "home cooking." For a time, Home was even the brand name of an oil and gas company. Home is a place of comfort and shelter, a place where we "belong," the place we come from ("my home town") and to which we long to go back, our place of origin, the site of our deepest and earliest memories. Like Dorothy, we are all taught that if we ever go looking for our heart's desire, we shouldn't look any further than our own back yard: "There's no place like home."

What if, to reverse the cliché, *home is like no place*? Rather than a place in the world, home may simply be an image of our heart's desire: it is not a place anyone has ever lived, but an ideal place, a no-place, a *u-topia*. At a certain level, we sense the falsity of the images of home concocted by Norman Rockwell's pictures, Disney movies, and Frank Capra films like *It's a Wonderful Life*—not to mention the architectural pornography of the myriad "house and home" magazines, whose "homes" resemble real homes about as much as the "women" depicted in *Playboy* resemble real women. And yet because these images teach us that this fictional "home" is our heart's desire, we believe in this myth. We feel deprived of the comfort of a home that never was, estranged from our real home by an imaginary ideal of what home should be. It is as if our homes are haunted by an ideal double: Home itself, the very model of hominess, the essence of Home. This ideal double is both always to come, in some utopian future, and irretrievably lost, with a flaming sword barring the way back. Home is, in Bill Clinton's phrase, "a place called hope," but also what we mourn. "Home" is more ghost, more *revenant*, than real; the "home" we seek in our homes is never found, but hovers on the margins, an unseen presence, an uncanny double of the streets and houses where we live. It is no wonder that the movies and other media that purvey images of Home are imbued with nostalgia: the home we long for is an ideal past that never was, an irrecoverable loss because, contrary to the cliché, you *can* lose what you never had (but you can never get it back). To go home at all is to return to that never-never-land, to go home *again*, and this time the cliché is right: you can't go home again.

As early as his 1920 *Theory of the Novel*, the Hungarian critic and philosopher Goerg Lukács reflected on the "transcendental homelessness" of modern life. In his major work, *Being and Time* (1927), the German philosopher Martin Heidegger traced the not-at-home-ness or uncanniness (*Unheimlichkeit*) of existence to the dominance in modern life of the impersonal authority of the anonymous "One" or "They" (*das Man*), the rule of "public opinion" (which is no one's in particular and everyone's in general) and other impersonal norms governing conduct and values. When "they" determine what "home" is and what it should be, it is no wonder that human existence is "not at home" (*nicht zu Hause*). But, Heidegger adds, we are so entranced by the endless activities and sheer busy-ness required to achieve some approximation of this illusory "home" that we scarcely notice our homelessness or the uncanny, not-at-homeness of our actual lives, which have been scripted by the They's impersonal societal norms rather than authored by the individuals living them. Only in privileged moments of anxiety does the "nothing" looming behind our scripted lives and manufactured desires break through the surface, and fill us with uneasiness.

Uneasiness, uncanniness, doubleness, the uneasiness that lies just below the surface: these haunt the works gathered together in the Court House project

in Kamloops [see page 155]. Each work unsettles, and confronts us with the realization that things are not as they seem—that home may not be where we think it is, and that it is something other than we'd imagined. Beneath the surface, monsters lurk, the unseen nine-tenths of the iceberg menaces, or worse: *nothing*. Upon the moving surface of the deceptively clear waters, images play, whether cultural clichés or personal, photographic memories. In all, there is a tension between surface and depth, between what is revealed and what is hidden, between the clear stream of consciousness and Lethe's river of forgetfulness, between the coercive and anonymous norms inhabiting our images and desires and our actual experience. Not that these works break through illusions to arrive at the truth; the disillusionment is that even when we discard some of the illusions foisted on us by the culture at large, our notion of what is "real" is based on other illusions.

This tension between ideal and experience, between one modern illusion and another, between past and present, is used to humorous effect in Panya Clark Espinal's installation, *The First Occupation*. The entertainment industry, which promotes the consumption of unnecessary and useless products and images in the relentless and yet strangely "tranquilizing" (Heidegger) round of earning and buying that constitutes so much of suburban and urban life, is confronted with the purity and simplicity of the toys and activities devised by Friedrich Froebel (1782–1852). As the inventor of the kindergarten as a place for young children to develop their cognitive and creative abilities through play, Froebel is part of the nineteenth-century movement which created childhood as a separate and relatively privileged stage of life (at least for those privileged enough not to have work in mines or factories or workhouses, or to fend for themselves in the vagabond life described in Dickens' *Oliver Twist*). Without this realm of childhood as a place of play—and hence a place of the consumption of leisure goods such as playthings, toys and entertainment—there would be no frenetic consumerism of the sort promoted by Disney and Toys 'R Us. But Froebel himself was a modernist-purist: the toys in his kindergarten used simple geometrical forms (like sticks and blocks) and required active manipulation in a program of "self-active learning," rather than the passive sensorial bombardment from the Disney factory; the aim of his activities for children was "the production of the beautiful, not only by [the child's] own activity, but by his own invention" (Wiebe 1892).

Modernist architects such as Walter Gropius and Frank Lloyd Wright passed through Froebel-inspired kindergartens, where they learned to love the austere purity of form; Clark Espinal's parents, both modernist architects, imparted this same love to her. In Clark Espinal's Froebel-inspired work, we witness a "return" to purity and simplicity, which is also a "return" to an imagined innocence of childhood. Clark Espinal's work, consisting of images created by making pin-holes or pricks on a grid, is based on an exercise Froebel devised to develop the creative and artistic sensibilities of children through "education or play" and which Froebel and his followers called "gifts," because through them the child could be given (back) to herself. Instead of a gift passively received, Froebel's gifts are "occupations": activities in which the child engages in order to develop and free the creative capacities inherent within, already "given" by nature. The book from which this "gift" is taken is titled *Paradise of Childhood*: a paradise lost, of course, a past that is inaccessible and irrecoverable because it was never really present—at every moment, even of childhood, it is the lost innocence of just a moment ago or "once upon a time," a dreamed or imagined past. Froebel, like many of his nineteenth-century contemporaries and followers, fervently believed in this paradise, and did in reality create this privileged place—this utopia—for children of privilege. The "reality" they constructed through their "gifts" approximated a past model only dreamed of (we

will see the same tension and play between past and present, real and imaginary, in Donald Lawrence's work), but which they took to be nature and nature's laws in themselves ("the secret workshop of a child's soul"). In effect, then, Clark Espinal's work confronts the consumerist present with an *ideal* past: the past that should have been, and that perhaps will be in a time to come, an *untimely* past which can perhaps free us from the real past's constraints and for a new future in which work and play coincide. The ideal and imagined past is also a lost possibility that stands before us as a utopian future which haunts the present.

This is unsettling or uncanny in itself, but even more unsettling is the realization that the passive consumerism of modern suburbia's actual present is perfectly "at home" in the utopian future of modernism: in the many suburban houses that owe much to Wright and Gropius, the frantic busyness of consumerist activity dwells comfortably within the tranquility of Froebel's pure forms. Froebel's purity (the pure past of innocence and the pure utopian future) and the consumerist impurity of the all-too-actual present contaminate each other: everything is impure, including the "pure"; positive and negative are reversible. This is not just a fact of the culture we live in; it is the invasion of Clark Espinal's own living room, through the agency of her children's consumption, a role made possible, ironically, by the movement that freed children from work and for "learning" and leisure—the movement in which Froebel played such a key role. Froebel's ideal paradise is the "fallen" consumerist world. In Clark Espinal's images, this reversibility of values becomes visible: the "front" of the image created by pinpricks also has its "negative" reverse side of raised bumps, creating the same pattern in reverse; the dark pinpoints can become points of light against dark ground through a change in the lighting. Front is back, dark is light, positive is negative, the past's dreamed-of and ideal future is the real present. Of course this is incongruous, and that's also why it's both humorous and unsettling.

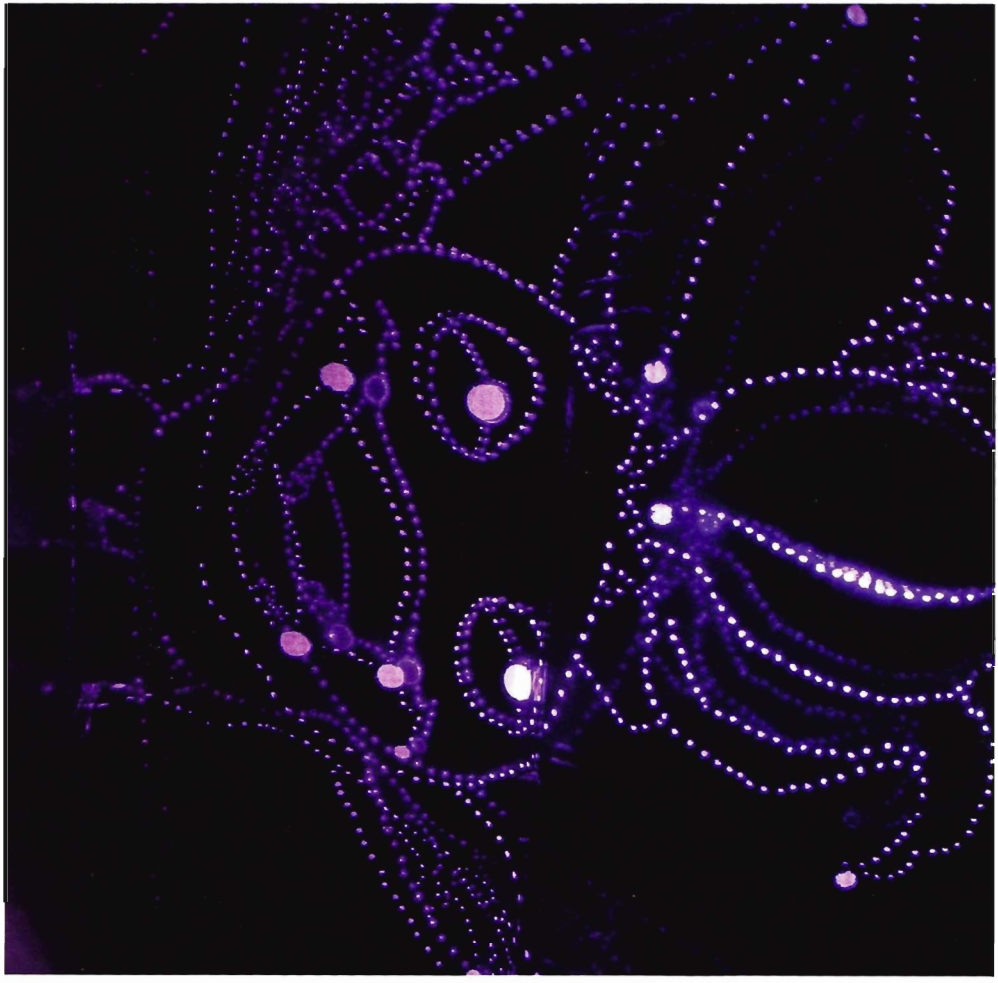
Clark Espinal, *The First Occupation*, Old Courthouse Project, Kamloops, 2005, installation detail. Photo: Dana Novak.

Clark Espinal's work thereby attempts to use this incongruity to wrest her life-narrative from the one dominated by the anonymous They—a move toward the personal, or toward the authentic, in Heidegger's words, and also an instance of Froebel's thesis that ideas which do not originate through one's own experience and mental activity "are simply the consent of the mind to the ideas of others." Yet it is not (as is often the case in Heidegger-inspired art) a "heroic" move, which challenges the everyday from a higher place (a lost tradition, an ideal). It is mock-heroic, and challenges the everyday with the everyday: one facet of the everyday (modernist purism) with another (hand-crafted images such as a kindergartner could make); the "universal" vernacular of consumer culture and high modernism with a personal vernacular constructed from personally

Clark Espinal, *The First Occupation*, Old Courthouse Project, Kamloops, 2005, installation detail. Photo: Dana Novak.

selected bits and pieces of the universal. Such *bricolage* is not sublime or tragic irony, but humour: the presentation of an incongruity surpassed through laughter (however nervous).

The *bricolage* of pure form and consumerist waste is most evident in Clark Espinal's use of materials. The Froebel-inspired grid piercings, with their beauty of pure form, share screen time with images of the sublime, that mixture of awe and fear caused by representations of powers that overwhelm us. A video image of water running down a drain, in a vortex or whirlpool, where the circular drain at the bottom of the tub sometimes seems to rise to the surface of the water which is about to flow down through it, becomes, through a further reversal from positive to negative such that the dark spots and stains on the tub's surface become tiny white points of light, the spiral galaxy of stars. From water down the drain—the descent into the maelstrom—comes a spiralling to "the starry heaven" of night that fills



Clark Espinal, *The First Occupation*, Old Courthouse Project, Kamloops, 2005, installation detail. Photo: Dana Novak.

the soul with wonder—in particular the soul of Clark Espinal's grandfather, a lover of astronomy (and of graphs). All of these beautiful forms and sublime movements are played out on a silver screen made of the foil inner liners of tetrapack Rice Dream containers which have been cut open and sewn together, the very antithesis of the sublimity of spiral galaxies and maelstroms, or the pure form of beauty. A bathtub drain, for that matter, is connected to the most everyday reality of raising children, the most common "gift" to the not-so-secret outer workshop of their bodies: bathing them. The shock of the incongruity between the ideal and the everyday is disquieting and humorous, like seeing a philosopher gazing at the heavens tumble into a ditch (or a bathtub): the indignity of such a fall is at odds with the dignity of thought that led to it.

But there's another joke in store: look carefully at the pin-prick starry heaven on Clark Espinal's screen. Beneath the beautiful changing swirls of

blue and pink projected onto the screen (the bottom of a bathtub risen to the sublime heights of cloud nebulae), the little points of light form into constellations: constellations of Disney princesses and Digimon characters. Disney figures made using Froebel's "gift" is a collision of opposites: "inauthentic" mass-produced culture vs. the "authentic" nurturing of the individual through hand-craft. A new mythology emerges. Certainly, one would just as easily (and arbitrarily) find Sleeping Beauty in the indefinite patterns of the stars as one could find Cancer the crab or Sagittarius the centaur. Disney's tales are to children today what myths and Aesop's fables were to ancient Greek children: the touchstone, the point of reference, the big cultural narratives through which they make sense of their smaller narratives, their "home base." Is this Disney goes to heaven or heaven brought down to earth? It is impossible to say: up and down reverse and pass into each other, the ridiculous becomes the sublime, the sublime becomes sublimely ridiculous. As a critic wrote of one of Clark Espinal's other works, *Like Ancient Pots*—which also plays with the ambiguities of underwater depths and surface images—"the irreconcilable difference between the one and the other—each of which is played to its limits—can only produce an imaginary reconciliation, a kind of hallucination of the real" (Fischer 1994). I would add: the hallucinated reconciliation or harmony is an illusion or effect produced by the incessant movement between contraries whose opposition is never resolved. In the midst of these collisions and reversals, the beauty of the "stellar configurations" shines through, and opposition is surmounted in laughter (it would take a heart of stone not to laugh at these incongruities).

Humorous incongruity also runs through Donald Lawrence's *Kamloops Archipelago*, a room-sized representation of how Kamloops might have looked 250 million years ago, when the Kamloops area was mostly covered by ocean, with islands jutting through at the highest points of what today are mountains. Instead of the arid desert we see today, a submarine, aquatic world was the environment of Kamloops' original denizens. This world, although vanished, persists as a primordial past, as an unconscious stratum of the hills and rivers of 2005. It is as if Kamloops today were floating uneasily on a hidden ocean that constitutes its true and original nature, and which could rise up and engulf it, as the rising ocean is swallowing up Vanuatu in the South Pacific: what lies on the surface is menaced by the depths of a volcanic and Plutonian sea, and what seems stable is threatened with impermanence. But the past that threatens to engulf the present both was (the Kamloops area really was an archipelago surrounded by ocean) and was not (Lawrence's model *imagines* the past): it is an imaginary-real past, a *surreal* past in the Surrealists' original sense of a fusion of dream and reality, the "primeval ocean" of art and imagination rather than of geo-history.

In that sense, it is perhaps more primordial than any historical or dateable past: it is the past that was never *present* but always *was*, the unconscious past on which the conscious present floats uneasily, haunting from below what emerges above the threshold of conscious awareness, coexisting with the present as its hidden and irrecoverable support, like the past we imagine in dreams to account for what is occurring in the dream's present moment: a fleeting, shadow-past, which can only be sensed, but never seen. In making this unseen (and strictly speaking: *invisible*) past seen and present, the *Kamloops Archipelago* performs the impossible—but an "impossible" that is also, according to philosophers like Deleuze (1981)and Lyotard (1971), the highest task of art: harnessing forces, making visible the invisible, allowing us to see or hear what we mostly only inchoately feel or sense.

At the same time, by superimposing this three-dimensional map of the past over the map of the present, the Archipelago "deterritorializes" Kam-

loops, and sets it adrift from its moorings in the perceptible, visible present (see Deleuze and Guattari 1986). The model Archipelago refers us to a past that lies buried below in the invisible and unknown subterranean remnants of a lost ocean. Above and below, surface and depth, past and present, pass into each other, until it is no longer clear which is which, much as the watery expanses of the *Archipelago* approximate the present-day rivers separating parts of Kamloops into separate "islands." The arid present is inhabited by the watery unconscious – "the region of the memory traces of *things*" (Freud 1917)—that is, by a "long and copious past... in which nothing that has once come into existence will have passed away, and all the earlier phases of development continue to exist alongside the latest one," however hidden these may be from the surface of conscious perception (Freud 1930). In the *Kamloops Archipelago*, this coexistence of past and present, this doubling of one into the other, is set to work and plays itself out before our eyes. A spectre is haunting Kamloops: itself, its own uncanny doppelganger, returning to itself from out of the past. Lawrence's work bids it welcome.

In doing so, Lawrence, like Clark Espinal, also bids welcome to the uncanny double of his own past, and achieves an individualizing or personalizing interpretation of a universal theme, or a personal interpretation of a broader narrative: an attempt to rewrite, in one's own voice, the life-narrative written by the anonymous They, but using the most everyday materials and images, rather than rising into the sublime or Socratic ironic superiority (see Deleuze 1969). Although Lawrence has lived in Kamloops for some sixteen years, this is the first of his works to specifically address the place and landscape of what has become his "home town." Yet the elements he brings to the *Archipelago* have a long history in his work: the element of the "home-made," using everyday and simple materials, also runs through his works involving kayaks (which included actual kayaks, or their parts, which Lawrence had made) and pinhole photography, and the element of water and coastlines is present in the kayak works and the pinhole photographs, most of which are underwater, others are of rusted ships' boilers and other jetsam. Where Lawrence's previous work deals with the Pacific and Atlantic coasts, the *Archipelago* brings the ocean to Kamloops itself—and given that Lawrence was largely raised on the Pacific coast, this gesture also amounts to bringing his coastal home "home" to Kamloops, or bringing Kamloops to the coast.

The "doubleness" of *Archipelago*, and the uneasiness it creates, thus sits—uneasily and incongruously—with this personalizing gesture of appropriation, in which the most everyday materials and forms (trestles like those supporting railway bridges and the irrigation "flumes" found near Kamloops) support a work in which primordial depths uncannily erupt to the surface of a vanished past made present. In fact, the deepest depth—the underside of the preparatory model of the *Archipelago*—is a return to the ordinariness of the everyday: it contains carved representations of the radiators and the sink and toilet that sit below the *Archipelago* in the Court House room in which it is situated. The ordinariness of everyday materials and objects, the "vernacular"—especially when those materials and objects are discarded or disregarded—is a major theme in Lawrence's work, whether in his use of materials (pinhole cameras, trestles, scrap wood) or the objects he depicts (ships' boilers, kayaks). As in Clark Espinal, Lawrence's work allows us to discern how the deepest and most sublime depths are also the most superficial, domestic everydayness: a theme also evident in his contemporaneous work, *Torhamvan/Ferryland*, a wood and canvas reconstruction of a rusted boiler cast on the Newfoundland shore following a shipwreck, both an act of homage to a sublime and accidental monument and the recreation of rotting industrial debris. The collision of the sublime with the worthless presents another humorous incongruity, and yet also an uncanny and

unnerving reversal and doubling of surface and depth, present and past, real and imaginary.

Uncanny doppelgangers haunting the cosiest and most domestic home-settings have long been prominent in David Hoffos' work, and the present work is no exception. In the on-going series of works entitled *Scenes From The House Dream*, video images of people are projected onto wooden cut-outs of human figures—some life size, some miniature—populating the series of scenes with present/absent "ghosts." The characters themselves are often engaged in incomplete and repetitive tasks, such as the image of a woman who smokes and drinks, changes the t.v. channel, and puts on her robe, or of another who sweeps a floor with a broom: this is motion as stasis, motion that is not going anywhere, caught in a kind of hell of waiting, where this time it is the future—cut off, inaccessible—that haunts the present. Genuine action requires the actualization of a new future—a movement from what is toward what is not. Here, *what is* circles around itself, unable to break the bonds of the present or to transcend itself toward the future. Like the characters in Sartre's *No Exit*, Hoffos' characters are condemned to be what they have been already, with no possibility of becoming anything else.

Yet there is a future in Hoffos' work, and it's not friendly. Like the past of Lawrence's Archipelago, the future in Hoffos' work doubles the present, returns to it, haunts it, menaces it. The future is not separated from the present by any sort of gap; the future is not "over there," a genuine "not yet," but is a vague and present danger. What is particularly under threat is the Home, the sense of the domestic as the heart of heartless conditions, as safe-haven, as the den and nesting place of comfortable family life. In one of the *Scenes from the House Dream*, a woman emerges from an Airstream trailer into the night, and fails to see the nearby ghostly apparition; in another, a woman walks the deck of a boat securely moored at a pier, but fails to see the giant squid lurking underwater—perhaps because, as a nineteenth-century handbook on sea-life suggests, kraken and other such monsters are "seen with the eye of the imagination" (Mangin 1870). In another work, *You Will Remember When You Need to Know*, the very cosiness of home and hearth becomes a source of menace: a model of an affluent, forest suburb (much like Kamloops' Rose Hill) has houses with windows that illuminated the night with a warm, yellow-orange glow; it is only on closer inspection that it becomes apparent that the glow comes not from lamps or fireplaces, but from the houses being on fire. Home heating oil: warm and cozy, and anxious and uncanny. In rushing to fulfill the dreams and desires instilled in us by the They, we plunge headlong into our worst nightmare, and the worst, as philosophers like Sartre are always reminding us, is never certain. By making a miniature model of the stereotypical ideal of "home" (modern, middle class, suburban, North American, two-car garage) and simply dimming the light, Hoffos defamiliarizes the familiar, and introduces the uncertainty of not quite knowing where one is: of being not-at-home in being at "home." The menace that haunts comfortable domesticity is there, but never quite grasped: a shadowy presence outside the home, a destructive cosiness within; a murky darkness or a maleficent light.

In his latest work, *Bachelor's Bluff*, Hoffos again effects an uncanny haunting of the domestic. A lighthouse, a beacon of warning and yet also of safety, stands in the distance on a shoreline at night. In the foreground, a solitary figure in an empty parking lot on a bluff above the shore tosses stones in the direction of the water. In the distance, off-shore, an undersea terror—Moby Dick? a giant squid from *Twenty-thousand leagues under the sea*? it is hard to see in the darkness—lies unseen beneath the surface. Here, water is a site of human gathering and communication (the lighthouse on the shore), but mostly "home" to that which threatens home: shoals, reefs, rocks, monsters. The depths breed monsters, but we are impelled, like Ahab, to pursue what we

David Hoffos, *Bachelor's Bluff*, Old Courthouse, Kamloops, 2005, installation detail.

fear, and to the point that what we fear and what we are become indistinguishable. What we fear is not so much "the unknown" as the repressed: Hoffos' characters do not just *not see* the danger lurking below the surface, they *do not look*, or they even turn away—as if they sense, at a pre-conscious level, the presence of something dangerous or forbidden. This is not simply ignorance; it is what Nietzsche calls "active forgetting," which Nietzsche says is necessary in order for us to involve ourselves in the tasks of everyday life (whether those tasks be great, like an artist's or a conqueror's, or trivial, like a shopping trip). If we remember too much, then we become too aware of the fleetingness and insignificance of existence; we become aware, as Heidegger says, of the Nothing that fills us with anxiety and dread, and which hovers just out of view, in the corner of an eye, or below the surface, or just beyond the horizon, or hidden in plain view like Poe's "Purloined Letter." The character in the parking lot turns his back on the sea and looks away—perhaps missing something decisive (a monster, himself, Nothing). Whatever it is he needs to face, he avoids: his look is not the penetrating gaze of someone resolved to get to the bottom of things, but of someone who just bluffs a look—a glance, which skips over the scene like stones over water.

We, though, must look more carefully than the bluffing bachelor, because something is here and then it's gone: Hoffos' figure for a brief instant, quick as the blink of an eye, steps out of himself and becomes his own double: haunted by himself, split into himself and an Other self (an other-than-self). This is the uncanny, the *unheimlich* feeling of "not being at

David Hoffos, *Bachelor's Bluff*, Old Courthouse, Kamloops, 2005, installation detail.

home," in its most banal everydayness, but also "live and in person," right before our eyes in its most literal manifestation. As in his other works, the solitary character—and all of Hoffos' characters, whether or not they are alone, exude a profound solitude and isolation—is engaged in a repetitive and desultory task, half-heartedly picking up rocks and throwing them towards the water. When he scans the sea absentmindedly, as if half expecting something to emerge from its depths but afraid to look at it directly, there is a feeling of suspense, of waiting, and *in vain*. *Nothing* is going to happen, and *nothing* keeps on happening, in a futile eternal recurrence: nothing is revealed, the mysteries only deepen, the disquiet and anxiety build. If the character has lost something (a love? a job? a home?), he seems to have forgotten what he lost, since what he has most lost is himself. Is the Bachelor's Bluff a "lover's lane" where couples make love, or a "lover's leap" where they end it? The bachelor hovers uneasily between both situations, neither in one nor the other and yet occupying both at once. Even while he remains "one" and "within" himself, he is already estranged from himself, already divided, already his own ghost, his *doppelganger*.

And what of those ghosts who populate Hoffos' work? Despite their air of verisimilitude, they recede from our grasp like Macbeth's dagger: we are aware that they are illusory, but as Hoffos remarks, "an illusion doesn't really work unless you know that there is an illusion." The spectral, haunting quality of these figures comes not from their being so convincing that we are taken in, but from that little gap between the suspension of disbelief and true conviction: this is the power of the false displaying itself in its falsity, not the cheap fakery of the midway sideshow or of Madame Tussaud's (see Deleuze 1989). The play of belief/disbelief, real/imaginary gives each image its doubleness and uncanny effect, its halo of unreality, which would be lost if, like a bunch of rubes at a carnival mid-way, we were entirely deceived by appearances. So Hoffos displays the projector that creates the ghost-like image within the diorama. Only the disillusion that preserves the illusion as illusion allows us to enjoy the illusion: we're in on the joke, even though we're the butt of it.

It's harder to laugh when the ghosts are real, as

they are in Ernie Kroeger's work, *Elegy for My Father* [see related image on page 163], which deals with haunting of another sort. There are several images of time and numbers, some reversible and some not: a number sequence in which the left-hand column runs from 1-84, facing a shorter, right-hand column of numbers from 1-48 (the reverse of 84); number series corresponding to measures of time (days and weeks, minutes and hours, and the fractions of a second used on photography to expose the negative); and a photographic image and its negative, in which left and right, top and bottom in one image is the reverse of the other. All form parts of a meditation on time, memory and loss, with the aim not of "active forgetting," but of the retrieval or search for lost time. For this is a work of mourning: for Kroeger's father, a draftsman who loved counting, numbers and reversing numbers (he would say he was 24 when he was 42)—and who died at age 84 when Kroeger was 48. He is pictured here diving off of the prow of a rowboat into the placid surface of a river in a photograph taken in what was then the U.S.S.R in 1929—a surface which remains a surface, below which there is no depth to be seen, although below the threshold of the surface there are depths to be *imagined*—as in Lawrence's Archipelago, Hoffos' shoreline and Clark Espinal's reversals of surface and depth in her refracted bathtub bottoms (surfaces). This surface marks both the threshold to an unknown "below" and an unknown "above," for in the negative image, the young (now old and deceased) father-to-be is "diving" *upward* from below into an equally impassable surface, which we believe his head penetrates, although we see only its absence from view. As in Clark Espinal and Lawrence, the way down and the way up are the same movement, reversed. It is a moment of pure becoming, where the past young man and the future deceased father pass each other in both directions (see Deleuze 1969).

Time, like the river and its negative, moves forward (as we like to think) and backward in the same instant, an idea also graphically presented in Kroeger's number mandala, where a figure in which squares numbered 1 to 9 in a clockwise spiral generates a counter-clockwise spiral, and spirals that are in a sense neither clockwise (forward) nor counter-clockwise (backward), but "sideways," as if time were moving up or down instead of forward or backward. If the spiralling heavens by which we measure time were to turn in reverse, as Plato's *Statesman* says they do at moments of cosmic crisis, then everything old becomes younger, until all mortals are returned to the condition of newborn infants—that paradise lost—and then fade into non-being, even as the dead rise up from the earth to form a new race of the living.

Number and measure are in part an attempt to impose some order and sense on the pure flux of becoming and time: the orderly sequence of minutes, hours, days, months and years is made possible through numerical measures and sequences. Kroeger's number images show that although we can depict the measure of time's passage, we are unable to depict or imagine the movement of passage itself. Equally personally, and more strikingly, Kroeger has also included an actual Kroeger clock built by his great-great-grandfather in 1860. It is a wall clock with a pendulum, displayed without its face, and so without the numbers by which we count and measure time, but with the mechanism of time measurement—the workings of the clock – exposed to view. The clock ticks, the pendulum swings, so that there is motion and change, but not the *number* or measure of change, which Aristotle thought was the essence of time. In fact, the face of the clock, like other images that can picture number sequences and increments of time, can only point to the present moment, the "now"—every image freezes time in a motionless instant.

Of course, that is the usual function of photographic images: to capture a moment, to freeze time, to preserve the moment in a memory-image.

If Kroeger's images did only that, they would be perfectly banal. But his images go further: through reversals of positive and negative, left and right, up and down, forward and backward, his images reveal the illusory nature of the frozen moment, unfreezing it, and setting it free from the linear time-line that runs from beginning to end, birth to death: Kroeger's father is becoming older (as the past moment recedes from the present) and younger (in relation to his future self) at the same time, as in Plato's *Parmenides*, where the instant is always growing older and younger than itself, but never coincides with itself. As Bergson remarked, if the moment could be frozen, then time itself, being composed of moments, would be motionless eternity instead of its moving image: a frozen moment would never budge, would never allow the next moment to take its place. A sequence of dead and motionless instants would itself be dead. Kroeger's images give us this vital truth: that every instant, whether seemingly present or recalled in memory-images, is full of the movement of the flux of duration, and this flux can never be captured by static spatial representations. Fortunately, Kroeger's images are anything but static: they move, but never in a straight line—time's arrow from past to future—but in all directions and senses.

Time itself is uncanny; it is always departing or returning, but never arrives home, never simply is where it is. In Hegel's terms, the temporal instant "is what it is not and is not what it is." This is what makes mourning so difficult. To mourn is to grieve for a lost past, a past that has *passed on* and receded out of reach. Even memory requires that the past no longer be present: no one can "remember" what is happening in the present. If time becomes unstuck, and starts moving both ways, then, as Faulkner quipped about the South, "the past isn't gone; hell, it's not even past." But then the past can be neither remembered nor mourned: and it is this impossibility of mourning, the impossibility of recalling what continues to return without arriving, that haunts Kroeger's work and gives it its power. Time past is time lost, and the time lost is a time of loss, so that the effort to remember is the melancholy effort to retain the experience of loss, not nostalgia's wish to retake possession of the past in the present. The aim is to preserve a past loss, not to make good on it or to overcome it through illusion or forgetfulness.

The present image of a past moment is also a past image of a moment that was present; each is reversible into the other, each like a number spiral can run clockwise (past to present) or counter-clockwise (present to past), but at the moment of arrival in the past or the present, finds that the moment it aimed for has moved elsewhere, is not where it is—like Alice in the Sheep's shop, who finds that "whenever Alice looked hard at any shelf, to make out exactly what it had on it, *that particular shelf was always quite empty*, though the others round it were crowded as full as they could hold." The moment of becoming is always displaced in relation to itself, always—like the face of the Kroeger clock—"missing" from its place, always eludes the present in simultaneously becoming both older and younger than itself (and so always before or after itself), always exceeds the units of measurement that would try to make it stay where it is: "It is the mirror," that is, itself and its reverse image, and the perpetual slicing and disequilibrium between the two (Deleuze 1969). It is no accident that Kroeger's images are full of mirrorings and surfaces, reversals and displacements. The depth of the mirror is what they present: a depth of the surface plane itself with all its characteristic reversals and inversions of direction (up and down, right and left, already and not yet, inside and outside, here and there).

On these surfaces, there are journeys and voyages, but no home-coming, no fusion of what lies on this side and on the other side of the looking glass.

Ernie Kroeger, *Father and Son*. 2005 (right

1	2	3	4				
8	7	6	5				
9	10	11	12				
16	15	14	13				
17	18	19	20				
24	23	22	21				
25	26	27	28				
32	31	30	29				
33	34	35	36				
40	39	38	37	1	2	3	4
41	42	43	44	8	7	6	5
48	47	46	45	9	10	11	12
49	50	51	52	16	15	14	13
56	55	54	53	17	18	19	20
57	58	59	60	24	23	22	21
64	63	62	61	25	26	27	28
65	66	67	68	32	31	30	29
72	71	70	69	33	34	35	36
73	74	75	76	40	39	38	37
80	79	78	77	41	42	43	44
81	82	83	84	48	47	46	45

no Platonic recognition and recollection of the past's "lost time." The past remains lost, not just in general, but specifically Kroeger's father's past—for the year he was born (1918), newly Soviet Russia "modernized" by switching from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar, with the result that thirteen days were "lost"; it is uncertain whether Kroeger's father was born on June 14 (Julian calendar, the one which most people in the Soviet Union still used to mark and measure time), or June 27 (Gregorian or new calendar). The time is out of joint: time itself is lost—visibly so, as Kroeger supplies a 1918 Russian calendar with 13 missing days—and we along with it, because the past is also *present* as that which haunts us without ever being there (*that particular shelf was always quite empty*) and as the future which returns to us as a *revenant* without ever arriving in the present. It is here and yet absent, *pas perdus*: lost steps, not lost (Breton).

Perhaps then Lukács was right about our "transcendental homelessness," and Heidegger about the not-at-home-ness or uncanniness of modern life. But for Heidegger and Lukács, "home" is a paradise lost which can be regained, either through overcoming alienation and returning to one's true self, or through an "authentic" response to the threat of one's mortality. For the artists presented here, that would be all too simple. "Authenticity" is a retrieval of a personal narrative from the alienating norms of the They, but not a return home or to one's true and "original" self. "Home" was an illusion to begin with: not an origin, but already a copy, a fabricated and fictive ideal of domesticity, purity and "being-at-one-with." At best, there is the ordinary, the everyday, the vernacular—which can be retrieved from the sometimes tranquilizing and always normative narrative of the They and its ideal of "home." When the illusoriness of home is revealed—when home is shown not to be the advertised "safe haven" (Hoffos), when it is cut loose from its present moorings and submerged by the past (Lawrence), when the purity of the ideal is shown to be contaminated with its opposite (Clark Espinal), when "there" and "back again" are shown to be interchangeable (Kroeger, and everyone)—then the ideal is always out of reach, always on the next shelf. Home is so remote. Let's go to your place.

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OLD COURTHOUSE DIALOGUES, KAMLOOPS

» BRUCE BAUGH, PANYA CLARK ESPINAL
» WILL GARRETT-PETTS, ERNIE KROEGER

The following "dialogues" were transcribed from a critical-creative symposium that took place in the old Courthouse in Kamloops, November 2005. This two-day event was a key element in a larger Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) funded Vernacular Modes of Creative Inquiry research project that brought together many of the artists and researchers whose work is featured in this issue.

To allow the artist-research team to develop their ideas around the vernacular, Donald Lawrence, as the Principal Investigator for this SSHRC Research/Creation project, agreed to curate an exhibition and to organize a symposium. The Court House project featured new installations by Panya Clark Espinal, David Hoffos, Ernie Kroeger and Lawrence and a two-day critical symposium that included talks by Celeste Olalquiaga and Walter Lew, as well as a series of conversations—the dialogues represented below—between pairings of artists and critics, moderated by Glen Lowry. These artist-critic dyads teamed Bruce Baugh with Panya Clark Espinal, Glen Lowry with David Hoffos, Celeste Olalquiaga with Donald Lawrence, and Will Garrett-Petts with Ernie Kroeger.

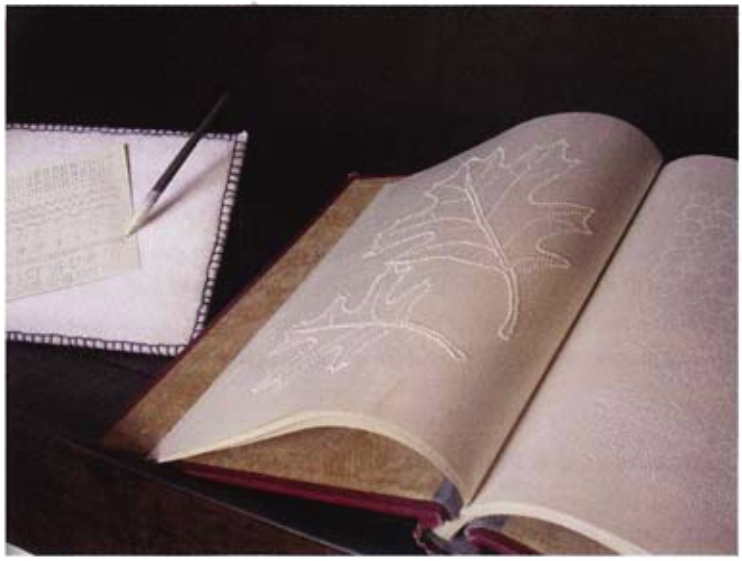
The editors offer the following abridged version of the original discussions. We believe that these dialogues stand on their own merit, and we hope that they will help round out our readers' understanding of both the context for this issue and the complex, at times contradictory, debates that have helped shape our understanding of the problematic of Staging Vernaculars.

I. BRUCE BAUGH & PANYA CLARK ESPINAL

BRUCE What Panya and I propose to do is talk a little bit about her work, which I hope you have all seen. It's really a wonderful work, in the full sense of the word wonder. It's dazzling; it's colourful. It appeals to the eye. It appeals to the touch. It appeals to the ears. Panya and I have actually been in discussions about the development of this work over a period of time. I'd just like to begin by asking Panya a bit about that, about where the project started.

PANYA I guess about a year and a half ago. I walked into a bookstore in Toronto and saw this book called *Inventing Kindergarten*. I have a four- and six-year old daughter—one has just left Kindergarten, and one is entering Kindergarten. But even prior to that, there's the whole negotiation as a parent, and if there's one thing to make you question your values and your nature—it's parenting. Because you see yourself passing things onto your children, and obviously wanting to foster certain qualities in your children that you think are valuable. Anyway, confronting the world of Disney and con-

sumerism and McDonald's and plastic and all these things that are floating around out there, seeing this book about the invention of Kindergarten was quite interesting to me. It's a book about Friedrich Froebel, who in the mid-1800s invented and coined the term Kindergarten, and invented a series of what he called "gifts" and "occupations," which were used to guide the children through a series of exercises that covered not only mathematics and abstraction, but also representing the world, and representing beauty and esthetics. Those all appealed to me because I was raised by modernist architects. As it turns out, there's a connection between Froebel's



Panya Clark Espinal, detail of paper perforation exercises

Kindergarten program and modernism, because a number of quite famous artists and architects—Frank Lloyd Wright, Walter Gropius, Kandinsky and various other people—actually studied in Froebel's Kindergarten program. The program is all based on the grid, and it has to do with various different wooden blocks and so on. But the first "occupation" which was actually the manipulation of material was the piercing of paper, so it was simply the process of taking a needle and poking it through a piece of paper and creating images and patterns. There was often a grid on the paper, so it went through kind of a systematic series of exercises. Now, Froebel was also one of the first educators who recognized the importance of self-activa-

tion, so while the children were led through these exercises, there was also, in the program, an emphasis placed on this notion of following one's curiosity and learning through self-activation.

Anyway, all of this sparked my interest and harkened back to kind of an idealism and a purity that somehow seemed to me to be lacking in today's culture. So I was going through a process of discovering this system. Downstairs, in the case at the bottom of the stairs, is a display which I sort of staged as being a display put on by the Kamloops Self-activity Enthusiasts Club. It's a display of an archive of an unknown Kindergartener who has been working with this first occupation of piercing and perforation. So I went through that process, using a reproduction of a textbook of the Froebel program.

Then I also wanted to kind of bring that into more of a contemporary realm, and so I made the work that's in this room. I ended up doing perforation in tetra-paks, which I had been collecting for quite a long period of time as a kind of by-product of consumerism. For various practical reasons, they were useful for making this projection screen. I feel like I'm rambling on. Maybe we should have another question. I could continue, but it is supposed to be a conversation not a monologue.

BRUCE I think you are doing great all by yourself, and I meant to ask you about the use of the Rice Dream tetra-paks, but you've talked about that. It's an example of what Walter [K. Lew] was talking about earlier—and also Celeste [Olalquiaga] and her talk—about the vernacular, and about the appropriation of these mass-produced materials that are cast off. I mean, now we have this big problem with landfills, filling up with this stuff, but the detritus of mass production—you've recuperated it for your own artistic purposes. I think that is really interesting, because on the one hand the finished work is very beautiful, but it's made out of garbage in a way. I was wondering if you could talk about some of the other material elements in the work—for example, the use of water, in particular, water in a bathtub and how that connected to the rest of it.

PANYA I had to use water. Donald told me, "You must use water in your piece." I didn't have a choice. It was interesting that Froebel used this term "occupations," and so this was called "the first occupation," and in reference to water, I started thinking about bathing—it's one of our main occupations in life. Life with young children is filled with many tasks that have to do with food and cleanliness.

There's another kind of astrology element that comes in for me at a certain time in this process. I was actually attempting, using the swirling water in my bathtub, to find this kind of astrological image, and when I used one of these cheesy special effects that Celeste was talking about—on my video camera there was an effect called negative art, or something along those lines, negative effect—it reverses the colours. So when I did that, my white bathtub turned into this dark bluish purple image with these tiny white spots, and it instantly became an astrological thing, and this kind of black hole spinning down into the drain.

So I ended up videotaping that, and in setting up the tripod in the bathtub, as the water was filling up in the bathtub, the image of the drain moved from just appearing at the bottom of the image to coming up to center stage, and then dropping back down as the water drained out. So it was my bathtub performing. Anyway, that came into it, but obviously, there's some sort of a desire on my part to try to—in these minute tasks of everyday life—find some sense of meaning and some connection to the universe. Froebel's whole

Panya Clark Espinal, Disney Galaxies

philosophy was about universality and connections. It came along at a time when we were discovering that there were mathematics in nature, that there was a commonality in molecular structures between everything, and so you know there's this sense that there's a universe there that we're part of, which I guess on a spiritual level becomes quite important.

So all of this kind of spun around. Then I had to deal with the fact that my kids are into Disney princesses and Pokemon characters. There's such a resistance on my part to these contemporary pop cultural things, and I guess I'm trying to use my work to somehow grapple with all that, I suppose on some level surrender to its importance somehow. So my astrological mapping became the galaxy of Disney princesses with the surrounding Digimon characters.

BRUCE Well, one of the things that intrigues me about that is that your Disney galaxy is done precisely using Froebel's methods. You've used those pinprick methods that down below on the first floor in the display case are shown more in their purity. You've got pure geometrical forms, then you've got an organic form, like the form of a leaf. And then you've applied that to the Disney characters. There seems to be a tension there, certainly, between Froebel's vision and the Disney galaxies or the Disney constellations. It also struck me as being really funny, and I'm not sure whether it was that way intentionally. But it took me a while. When I first looked at it, I just noticed, "Oh this is so beautiful, and look at the light coming through those pin pricks." And then it's just like looking at the night sky: after a while, your eyes adjust, and you start to see patterns, and the patterns I saw were princess Jasmine and people like that. So I was just wondering if you wanted to say something about that tension or struggle, if there is one, between that kind of purity that you have in Froebel and what you have to contend with in Disney.

PANYA I guess what comes to mind for me is just that all of the history and the language that we use in culture is such a construction. I've always been challenged with this, partly because I find it difficult to study theory and to read, to follow language. A lot of my other work has been about the process of reproduction, and trying to bridge gaps between myself and the world as represented to me in images. And so when I think about the night sky and how these constellations have been identified: there is such an arbitrariness to this pattern of stars, and then they say, "That's Draco the Dragon," because somehow somebody laid this image overtop, and it got embedded into all these astrological notions. I guess it's the whole

idea of storytelling in mythology. To me it's kind of thinking, "You know, those constellations could just as well be Disney characters." Maybe that's the new mythology. It kind of moved in that direction.

[...]

II. WILL GARRETT-PETTS AND ERNIE KROEGER

WILL Don asked Ernie and me to go last and perform a kind of double duty. Did you know this, Ernie?

ERNIE No.

WILL Ernie didn't know this. [laughter] Our role is to engage in a dialogue about Ernie's work, but also to reflect and draw in some of the other comments that have been made. That's where I'd like to begin, by talking about the format of this panel and the dialogue it invites. I love the opening comments from Walter about "film talking" and the whole idea of creating a space for unsanctioned comments. I think that's what we're about and what a good interview and a good discussion does—it draws out unsanctioned comments, maybe surprising comments about one's own work too. So I find that an interesting situation to be in. Also, I've been writing lots of notes because of our double duty role. Reading over those notes, I think it's intriguing that my questions have changed significantly from what I thought I was going to ask. Let me begin with a couple of observations and then turn to Ernie.

It seems to me that Ernie's work is about ways of responding, of recording, of processing, but more than anything, of identifying the relationship between ideas and objects—that ideas modify objects, but objects also modify ideas. I wonder if you could respond to the latter part of that first of all. In what way do the objects that are important to you modify both your ideas and your practice?

ERNIE Well, first of all I have to say that this work, *Elegy for My Father,* has grown out of an object, which is the photograph that is tucked into the mirror in the installation. And so the role it plays is a primary one, as a kind of wellspring for inspiration, for meditation in a way. Also for thought and for working out certain kinds of ideas, so really it's a primary source. And of course there are other objects—some of them fake, some real—but let's say that one of the objects, the photograph, begins a kind of narrative where the contemplation of that object raises questions: "What does it mean?" "When was it created?" "What's the context?" And then in an unex-