

# Action Agenda: Vancouver's Prescient Media Arts

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## Abstract

*I wish to formally acknowledge that the city of Vancouver is on the unceded traditional territory of the Coast Salish speaking peoples and thank them for the guardianship of this place.*

Beginning in the 1960s Vancouver's hyper active media art scene was a hotbed of experimentation, collaboration, technical play and radical engagement, with a proliferation of organizations engaged with media art. Rather than proposing a holistic understanding of the forces that shaped and articulated the Vancouver media scene of the 1960s through the early 1990s I have chosen antecedents to personal points of engagement and some eleven moments of disruption with which I am familiar. These include radicalizations, institutional partnerships, autonomous/semi-autonomous artists' formations; campaigns for mass media inclusion; feminist media impulses; Lotus-Land sociality; leadership inside and outside the academy; internationalism and race consciousness; indigenous self-government; interdisciplinarity; anti-censorship activism. I will attempt to summon the flavors of the times through text and image.

## Keywords

Artist-run centre; censorship; citizen's media; computer arts; disruption; feminism; indigenous; labour; Marxism; media art, performance, Slowscan, verite, video art.

## Introduction

Beginning in the 1960s Vancouver's hyper active media art scene was a hotbed of experimentation, collaboration, technical play and radical engagement, with a proliferation of organizations engaged with media art. There are eleven intertwined signals or forces that heralded and manifested disruption in the Vancouver scene:

1. Intensive and productive radicalization – left-coast and counter-culture, Marxism, labour, feminisms;
2. Episodic yet deep partnerships between formal and alternative institutions—University of British Columbia (UBC), Vancouver School of Art (Emily Carr), Simon Fraser University (SFU), Vancouver Art Gallery (Figure 1); Cable Television, Canada Council for the arts;
3. Powerful autonomous/semi-autonomous artists' organizations which exist to this day;
4. Early campaigns for mass media inclusion;
5. Strong feminist media impulses;
6. "Lotus Land"<sup>1</sup>

7. Experiential learning and leaders from inside and outside the academy
8. Pronounced internationalism and engagement with cultural race politics;
9. Indigenous media arts expression built on strong indigenous self-government;
10. Interdisciplinary collaboration: computer arts;
11. Anti-censorship activism

This paper is drawn from oral history interviews with a number of close colleagues; a series of interviews that I undertook in the late 1980s; cover to cover reading of 38 issues of Video Guide - the publication of the Satellite Video Exchange Society/Video In that had extensive reporting on activities in and beyond Vancouver in the video art and documentary scene; reading of *Kenesis* a feminist magazine of these times based in Vancouver; review of my personal archives; rereading of core theory from the period; exploration of online archives and excellent sites, such as Mainstreeters: Taking Advantage<sup>2</sup> and Ruins in Process: Vancouver Art in the Sixties<sup>3</sup> and Grunt Gallery<sup>4</sup>. I reread Stan Douglas's edited volume *Vancouver Anthology* which is an important re-published reference book as is *Making of Video In*, edited by Jennifer Abbott. It is a very limited glimpse into a dynamic time.

## Intensive polarized radicalization – “left-coast” and counter-culture

The two directions of the utopian moment of late 1960s and early 1970s media counter culture described by Martha Rosler<sup>5</sup>, were especially pronounced on the west coast of Canada. The social movements of the sixties and early seventies converged with the countercultural, “utopian, populist, irrationalism”, of the hippie movement and “progressive, rationalist, anti-sexist, anti-imperialist”, but equally utopian (and I now I would also add counter-cultural) movement of the New Left.<sup>6</sup> As Nancy Shaw suggests and artists from this period who I interviewed confirm, McLuhanism had engaged the imaginations of artists, intellectuals and elites, "McLuhan considered artists to be a special group of perception experts who could, through experiments with new technology, create a situation where humour and innovation pierced the habitual - artists were to become educators of the future."<sup>7</sup> Hank Bull captures the sentiment of the times:

*Global consciousness was something I felt and wanted to evoke in my work, right from the beginning. Buckminster Fuller was an important influence—Spaceship Earth—along with the Yippies, the Black Panthers, Black American music. Other mentors were W.S. Burroughs and his message of linguistic, imaginary and sexual liberation, and Robert Filliou, with his Eternal Network, and “art is what make life more interesting than art... I believed then and still do that the positive aspects of the network – collaboration, communication, understanding across difference, basic global humanity – will outweigh the negative side – surveillance, propaganda, commodification, control—if only just barely.”<sup>8</sup>*

At the same time as McLuhanism’s rose in popularity there emerged a materialist critique of mass media provoked by Hans Magnus Enzenberger<sup>9</sup> and Alvin Gouldner<sup>10</sup>, and predicated on Walter Benjamin’s early writings, saw social production increasingly centralized in the mass media, but argued also that mass media like means of production could be seized, socialized, democratized and run by its workers.<sup>11</sup> These views resonated well within a province where politics had long polarized along left/right splits. British Columbia had retained strong left-wing social activism, within its powerful union movement, women’s and emerging social movements. Marxist ideas and applications from many schools of thought (feminist<sup>12</sup>, New Left such as *Late Capitalism* by Ernest Mandel<sup>13</sup> or Terry Eagleton’s *Criticism and Ideology*<sup>14</sup>, Communist Party of Canada, Frankfurt School<sup>15</sup>, Weimer Dada – were present in institutional settings (unions, community organizations, women’s movement and university cultures). In the 1960s, Vancouver was refuge to many young American draft resisters who had moved North often influenced by hippie and radical cultures – supplying talent to SFU, UBC and the Vancouver School of Art (ECUAD).<sup>16</sup>

As Dana Claxton states it, “I guess they don’t call it The Left Coast for nothing. I moved to the West Coast, when I was 22 and everywhere I went there was a politics. I worked at Georgia Straight and quit because they would not stop running Red Hot Video ads.”<sup>17</sup>

European settlement had only been present for just over a century in the 1960s. The late Kate Craig, an Intermedia member, a founder of the New Era Social Club and the Western Front describes the lack of enforced cultural norms:

*There’s a tremendous freedom in Vancouver; much less of a burden of history and [European] culture than there is in Eastern Canada. This has had a tremendous influence on me and, I would think, on a lot of people in Vancouver, especially those who’ve grown up here. There’s such a strong influence of Asian culture here: colour, food, it can’t help but affect you.”<sup>18</sup>*

In fact, Vancouver represents unceded indigenous territory, and despite the disruptions of residential schools and



Figure 1. Vancouver Art Gallery security guards sitting a electronic sound sculpture by Dennis Vance entitled Fat Emma. It is a fiberglass module that picked up various radio stations through movement. Collection of the artist.

political intervention, powerful indigenous groups and organizations existed through the centuries of contact, including the powerful fisher organization, the Native Brotherhood<sup>19</sup> and many First Nations organizations.

### **Institutional partnerships – SFU, UBC, Vancouver School of Art (ECUAD); Vancouver Art Gallery; Cable TV – cycles of support and dismissal**

Eager to stimulate and inspire creativity on Canada’s West Coast, academics from UBC, SFU, The Vancouver School of Art, the Canadian Broadcasting Commission (CBC) staff and independents in the cultural scene connected Vancouver to the international arts and alternate music worlds, particularly in the United States. The crucible Festival of Contemporary Art at UBC initiated in 1961, ran for a decade and brought in leading international figures such as Stan Brakhage, Robert Creeley, Yvonne Rainier to mix with local artists. Marion Penner-Bancroft insists that thanks to the festival, change “came from the outside”<sup>20</sup> to

the city. Simon Fraser University provided a home to Merce Cunningham and Alwin Nikolais who came from Laban/Hanya Holme<sup>21</sup> dance notation and Martha Graham.<sup>22</sup> Marshall McLuhan lectured at the Design Gallery<sup>23</sup> with Arts Club support. Impresario Jamie Reid introduced Be-Ins, with bands such as Country Joe, The Jefferson Airplane playing at the Russian Hall.<sup>24</sup> and Janis Joplin at the appropriately named Trip Festival.” Reid insists that despite counter cultural influences, “the other social movements — the movement against the Vietnam War and the Civil Rights had a much more powerful effect, and also the movement for women’s rights.”<sup>25</sup> Abraham Rogotnick describes a resulting environment that was intimate, yet disruptive, “transmitting the sense of excitement, the sense of doing something new, doing something for the first time, experiencing something that we hadn’t experienced before....”<sup>26</sup>

## Powerful Autonomous and Semi-Autonomous Artists’ Institutions

### Intermedia

The mix of international influences and powerful university aspirations towards interdisciplinarity of the 1960s<sup>27</sup> resulted in the creation of Intermedia in 1967 (Figure 2), an umbrella for artists, educators and influential leaders of the Vancouver community, touched by non-Western thought, drugs, technological counter culture. Intermedia’s disciplines embraced sound, sculpture, poetry, video, performance, happenings, dance, fashion, cooking, craft, printmaking, photography, and filmmaking.<sup>28</sup> Over its six years, according to Crista Dahl, it focused on collaborative cultural expression, new institutional models and educational transformation.<sup>29</sup> Shifting artists’ relationships with their audience to address a broader public and enable co-creation was one of its aspirations.<sup>30</sup>

Technology was central to its mandate. Artists articulated a missionary role, “...new concerns and criteria in education and communications that utilize the technology that we have evolved in the continuous and urgent need to explore new perspectives of our human use and our ecology.”<sup>31</sup>, affirming that, “...in a world of such staggering complexity and fierce rate of change (artists) have moved quickly and deftly to the use of new electronic technologies as their most effective means of expression.”<sup>32</sup> This thinking can also be seen as a hope that technology would solve Canada’s growing economic and cultural identity crisis. It’s stated mandate to bring together the potential of art, science and industry was hailed as a “new alchemy” by journalists such as Catherine Fairburn, “Theories put forward by McLuhan and others would be subjected to suitably controlled tests and experimentations...Any aid that computers could make to communication would be explored and specialists in cybernetics would participate in research.”<sup>33</sup>

Intermedia collaborated with established institutions. The Vancouver Art Gallery ran satellite galleries in community centres. There were Intermedia Nights 1968, the Electrical Connection Show of 1969 which was modelled on



Figure 2. Steve Paxton Dance Workshop Intermedia, 1969

E.A.T. in New York (Experiments in Art and Technology which also had a Montreal branch), and the Dome Show, 1970.

Intermedia undertook initiatives in education and in citizen’s media, opening an experimental kindergarten and a free high school, but with a loose affiliation with Simon Fraser University faculty.<sup>34</sup> Michael Goldberg and Crista Dahl who went on to found Video Inn/SVES, were faculty for the extension activities which included the Artists in the Schools program. Other Video Inn founders Paul Wong and Shawn Preus were teenagers who fell instantly in love with the video camera and its potential thanks to this program.<sup>35</sup> Dahl insists that the important work that women undertook in great part as educators as well as artists through Intermedia has been erased from its history, “One third of Intermedia were women. We had a big show at the VAG... We did a lot of art in the school program and there was experimental art in the afternoons...”<sup>36</sup>

Intermedia had received an unprecedented grant of forty thousand dollars from the Canada Council for the Arts. The Donner Foundation awarded it \$21,500 to undertake citizen media activities and establish a citizen’s media production arm, Metro Media after an extensive lobby from not-for-profit, the National Film Board, citizen’s groups, anti-poverty organizations and the universities. Finding itself with resources, Intermedia promptly dissolved in 1972, fearful of becoming bureaucratic and because internal tensions were boiling over according to Shawn Preus, –in particular film versus video, feminism versus ‘egocentrism’,<sup>37</sup> art versus citizen’s media. These differences were expressed as specializations that warranted more focused initiatives. Preus continues, “...dancers were alienating everyone; writers were disorganized but wanted more of a formal organization and created the B.C. Writers Guild. People went more traditional towards film. There was a rift between Video Inn and Metromedia – Video Inn (Figure 4.) was considered artsy and Metro Media was opposed to artists taking equipment out.”<sup>38</sup>

Western Front co-founder Hank Bull saw it differently with centres finding their appropriate audiences, mandate

and relationship to the question of art practice and democracy. *Metromedia* (1971) focused on citizen/community access, the Western Front (formerly New Era Social Club), SVES/Video Inn, Reelfeelings Women's Collective, Women in Focus in 1974. In 1975 the CRTC regulated Co-Op Radio which served as a model for artist/community controlled broadcast media and younger artists established Pumps Centre for the Arts 1975<sup>39</sup>

A factor in *Intermedia's* dissolution may also have been the withdrawal of support from the Vancouver Art Gallery. Swept up in the movement for change of the 1960s the director of the Vancouver Art Gallery Tony Emery supported *Intermedia* and its many events in the Vancouver collaborating closely with curator Doris Shadbolt.<sup>40</sup> As the seventies advanced and with it intensified social polarization, Emery left the gallery under pressure from a board that according to Gathy Falk wanted to revert to a more traditional practice including highlighting the gallery's collection.<sup>41</sup> We see one of the first waves of tension between Vancouver artists' centres and efforts and formal institutions.

### Video Inn/SVES (now VIVO – Video In/Video Out)

Held on the heels of *Intermedia's* break up, the 1973 Matrix conference<sup>42</sup> organized by Michael Goldberg and Tricia Harding brought one hundred and forty practitioners from Japan, Canada, USA, France, UK and attracted many Canadian organizations and established deep ties between Vancouver and the international media arts and documentary communities. It focused on access to cable and new forms of video production, from video art, to vérité documentary to performance documentation.<sup>43</sup>

Michael Goldberg, influenced by McLuhanesque free flow of communication well-shaken with a Marcusian leftist twist added vs corporate and state disinformation established the first International Video Exchange Directory in 1972, from which sprung the Satellite Video Exchange Society and Video Inn (Figure 3), and then begat Video Out distribution in 1980. Access to the means of production underlay these initiatives. As Paul Wong notes, "The emergence and availability of consumer priced, non-broadcast dominated technology – the Portapak - made it possible to go out in the field and to work outside the conventions and traditional confines of broadcast television and previous models that were the only models".<sup>44</sup>

According to Wong, after *Intermedia*, "The Video In was a more focused zeroing in on video. That collaboration included experimental avant garde arts and collaboration with educators and political activists, AIM [American Indian Movement], Black Panthers, Feminists, Queers [word came later] and Lesbians who all intersected with each other and idea of DIY media advocacy."<sup>45</sup> He continues:

*It was the dawn of artist run centre movement that modelled itself on same structures of public art institutions, 'wait a minute we can do that too'. All of that came out of the DIY movement of the 1960s. If you cannot wait for institutions to*



Figure 3. Video Inn (1973) 261 Powell Street, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. Courtesy of Paul Wong

*transform, do it yourself, taking advantage of non-profit societies act and what that offered you... You could duplicate and mail and videotape from around the world and screen in our screening room set up like a living room and then went to someone's else's gallery.*<sup>46</sup>

The SVES had established itself as an educational organization with charitable status as well as an art centre. They arranged a tax exemption with Custom and Excise which would serve the video community for many years. Paul describes his contact with SVES, "I was really young, so it happened at the same time as I was walking into the world. I was part of the 'democratization of media revolution'. We just did it. We created alternative models by doing."<sup>47</sup>

In its early years the Video Inn (SVES) had a family-like aura, much like the Western Front. It was a live-in community according to Dahl:

*We lived on Powell Street and it was a library and there were eight of us living together. And that was when I started not throwing anything out which is why we have a big print collection. We had a big kitchen and a bathroom with a shower which we used as a dark room and we had lofts where people were sleeping and people took turns cooking and there was always something going on. It was truly a library where people came in during the day...The mice, the cockroaches never bothered me; the bed bugs never bothered me. Shawn, Paul and Jeannette were bitten – we had to get out of there... We started to get a little grant money and shared it.*<sup>48</sup>

In examining the institutions that survived through over four decades until current times, and in speaking to their members, it is clear that there was a high capacity for disruptive collaboration – to scale up to create major events such as the major I video installation show *Luminous Sites*<sup>49</sup>, or share pragmatic activities such as purchasing video tape. For example, Women in Focus (a feminist media centre) and

the Video In both adopted anti-censorship stands from the mid-1980s onwards and created large scale collaborative events (discussed later). Hank Bull explains:

*There are many examples of cooperation between artist centres, universities and large institutions like the Vancouver Art Gallery. It's a small town. To make things happen, you have to work together. VIVO and the Front often partnered, while at the same time filling clearly separate roles. When it came to something big, like Strategies for Survival, the international conference that took place as a site of resistance to Expo '86, all the centres worked together<sup>50</sup>. The Vancouver Artists' League was the umbrella group formed to produce this event. It later became the Pacific Association of Artist-Run Centres (PAARC).<sup>51</sup>*

The artist-run media centres were responsible for every touch point in the creative cycle - production, distribution, critical discourse and curation. Publication became an added dimension. Video art remained on the margins and publication was extremely important, hence the creation of *Video Guide*. Zainub Verjee who worked at various artist-run centres states it, "Those early writings are about what the relationship between culture and technology is and that is the re-making of Canadian national identity."<sup>52</sup>

### Western Front

The Western Front (Figures 4, 5) was an artist-owned, fully curated environment – by this I mean it supported its own founders' work and then built a powerful program of artists' residencies and new works production. It was deeply influenced by countercultural values – a Dadaesque sense of humour, DIY sensibility and technological experimentation. It supported video art and installation, visual art, music, dance, performance art and early computer art, radio art, sound and multicasting experiments. The Western Front's early programs brought artists such as Willie Wegman and Joan Jonas to Vancouver to create new works and these individuals in turn became a resource for local artists – building an international network through residency and exhibition invitations. Kate Craig described the lifestyle philosophy of the Western Front:

*The concept of group effort is very much a part of the politics of the Front. How do you define politics? The [mayoral Mr.] Peanut campaign was certainly overtly critical of the political process, but how one organizes one's life is also political...I don't think that there has been anybody at the Front, ever, who aligned themselves with any political faction...Nobody belongs to the Anarchist Party of Canada; nobody even belongs to the unions...It's not so much a critique, as it is an alternative, a way of dealing with one's life 24 hours a day, how one relates to the outside world or to one's community. The motivation behind a*



Figure 4. The Western Front in 1972 when purchased.



Figure 5. The Western Front 2010.

*lot of the work is very positive; it's about being able to find resources—people, buildings, and facilities to actually produce something new. It's never been a school; there's never been a manifesto; there has never been an overt affiliation, except with other artists.<sup>53</sup>*

Zainub Verjee who became the Front's artistic director in the 1990s insists that there was still a politics, "...this art comes from the avant garde, FLUXUS spaces where they refuse to say art is political...yet, Robert Filliou, *Art is Life*, yet the work is political. Work like Hank's *HP Radio*[*HP Dinner Hours* on Co-Op Radio beginning in 1975] with Patrick Ready.<sup>54</sup> Mona Hatoum comes in and does *Measures of Distance*<sup>55</sup> a very poetic work but in the street."<sup>56</sup>

What we would now describe as "Networked art"<sup>57</sup> found a home at the Western Front. Fax party events were common and the Front became a centre for Slowscan. Hank Bull proposes that these practices are early "social media". Hank Bull, "worked with Bill Bartlett of Direct Media on Pacific Rim Slowscan. This led to participation in many network projects of the 1980s"<sup>58</sup> Examples include *La Plissure du Texte* (Electra, Paris, 1983)<sup>59</sup> and *Planetary Network* (Venice Biennale, 1986)<sup>60</sup>. Bull continues, "Throughout this period (and since) an occasional series of exchanges

called *Wiencover* linked Vancouver and Vienna as a kind of virtual [imaginary] city in the ether”.<sup>61</sup> In another instance, during the *Hands Across the Border Slow Scan Event*<sup>62</sup> six independent art centres, Vancouver, Victoria, Toronto, NYC, Memphis, San Francisco, multi-point interconnect slow scan on July 29<sup>th</sup>, slow scans involve the use of computer robot to frame a video signal to an audio signal and transmit over telephone.<sup>63</sup>

For *Video Inn's* fifth anniversary party the Western Front and Video In created a Slowscan event with Willoghby Sharp from NYC and VI party “one of the best studio parties of the year for 250 or so guests” PW “Slowcan messages were sent and received throughout the evening with mutual birthday greetings from Grenada Gazelle/General Idea.<sup>64</sup> Cornelia Wynngaarden describes the quality of these events and infers the need for a party atmosphere, “Slow Scan which was interesting but I could never stick it out to see if anything interesting was being expressed because of my impatience (slooooooooooooooooooo scan). In retrospect there is evidence that remarkable events happened at a long distance.”<sup>65</sup>

### Early Campaigns for Media Inclusion

The struggle for mainstream media access – not within the gallery system, but in the mass media, runs a parallel track to the emergence of the artist-run centres. Citizen’s media held to a series of principles articulated through the *Challenge for Change*<sup>66</sup> program of the NFB, a Canada-wide initiative to use media to empower the disenfranchised: that those with less information were also the most impoverished 'to improve communications between individuals and groups in all segments of society concerned with and affected by poverty'.<sup>67</sup> At the same time as educating, the idea was to organize: providing technology within the means of a community; ensuring production control (editorial approval) by the subject; and, giving communities the right to decide on what would or would not be distributed.<sup>68</sup>

Paolo Friere’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, translated into English in 1971 reverberated around the world and reinforced the Challenge for Change model. Friere argued that the learner needed to be treated as “the co-creator of knowledge”, a concept that has lost its radical edge in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>69</sup> These principles were echoed in the move towards vérité documentary, which like other forms of modernism sought the essence in a situation or documentary encounter.<sup>70</sup> Direct cinema was foundational to feminist and other social movement video which used vérité formats for self-representation. Metro Media, spun out of Intermedia, was meant to fulfil provide the tools to social movements and the underrepresented to present their case to power, their own communities and the media.

Issues of early *Video Guide* (Figure 6) through the 1970s are filled with calls for attendance at Canadian Radio and Television Commission hearings to support Co-op Radio<sup>71</sup> as a community-radio station (1975) and to give views on cable licensing. Metro Media and the Video Inn lobbied for “access to a local, high-quality broadcast channel, financed



Figure 6. Video Guide, Summer 1980, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

by the cable system”.<sup>72</sup> Despite Video Inn’s strong internationalism (I will discuss this later), Canadian nationalism was used as an argument by artists and Citizens communications advocates citing the Fowler Report of 1965<sup>73</sup> and the new Broadcasting Acts 1968/1970<sup>74</sup> as well as a 1972 “study group” on access who found that the federal government was already spending millions on, “electronic and electromagnetic communication, rather than relying on existing television, ‘instead the man and woman on the street are making direct use of communication technology for themselves.’<sup>75</sup> Reports stated that, “Every citizen has a right to television service”.<sup>76</sup> These debates are reminiscent of contemporary concerns regarding Internet access, throttling and the right to be online, let alone dialogues about the role of public broadcasting. Metro Media opposed the ownership of stations by cable networks, arguing that community video should be funded, licensed and provided with the means of production to ensure quality, locally generated production”.<sup>77</sup>

Despite artists, such as Elizabeth Vander Zaag finding employment as a technician at the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), the local corporation did not provide routes of access, seeing citizen’s vérité documentary as amateurish. The Vancouver Community Television Association

established in 1975 (representing all artist media groups on the West Coast) spearheaded unsuccessful attempts by sixty community groups to get a CRTC license, in part because in 1975 Rogers withdrew its backing. Making the arguments for recognition, Michael Goldberg and Crista Dahl of the Media Alliance stated to the commission, “We feel that it is time that Canadian audiences see the software [programming] that is winning awards and recognition elsewhere.”<sup>78</sup> As cable operators were licensed they put their funding into hardware when in fact 10% cable revenue was supposed to go to software [i.e. content].

In 1978 the Association for Public Broadcasting in B.C. (APBBC) organized a Citizen’s Inquiry into the Content, Control and Effect of Broadcast Media in the Community which took place on February 23, scheduled to coincide with CRTC hearings and located in the same hotel. Ross Gentleman, a regular writer for Video Guide and active member of the Video In (Figure 7), reporting on the APBBC hearings summarized:

*Some of the issues raised were: the neglect of local affairs and neighbourhood issues by CBC; the practice of crisis/sensational news reporting; the maintained stereotypes of women, prisoners, unions, native people and the handicapped; our media’s insensitivity to gays and blacks; the quality of news analysis; the effect of TV on the spoken language; the erosion of small neighbourhoods and communities; unnecessary centralization (CRTC and CBC) which give us no control over what’s placed on our airwaves; censorship; and the cultural drugging of our children.*<sup>79</sup>

A November 6<sup>th</sup>, 1978 meeting at the Western Front provided opportunities to blue sky about the potential of an independent station. *Video Guide* reports in an article entitled, “Video Alternatives, or just how alter can video be?” (which aptly captures the concerns around broadcast cooption while acknowledging aspirations for inclusion, “While a rainstorm raged outside, a dozen would-be alternate media executives sparked off a brainstorm over the ongoing Sisyphus effort to set up an alternative TV channel.”<sup>80</sup>

What did emerge until cutbacks at Rogers in the mid-1980s, was significant cable access for community media makers and documentary producers and occasional artists’ programming (most famously John Anderson’s *Gina Show*) through Rogers’ Cable Ten.<sup>81</sup> Anderson recalled that the *Gina Show* featured Paul Wong “4”, Canadian art critic John Bentley Mays reading Revelations “you can never leave the church”, Elizabeth Vander Zaag’s *Digit*, people on the beach and trampolines. John joked that the content of *Gina* was, “Sex, drugs, rock and roll and garbage... and its audience were, “young people, realtors, West Enders”. It had a different look and feel, not documentary, shooting in Vancouver with pre-packaged bits filled in with Gina talking.<sup>82</sup>

Metro Media had been intended as a vehicle for cable production liaison but direct access through Neighbourhood Television Offices such as Vancouver East for training and



Figure 7. Jeanette Reinhardt and Paul Wong, Video Inn, Kid Vid Event, 1973, Courtesy of Paul Wong

production support overrode their mandate and ultimately marginalized them. Reporting in *Video Guide* in 1983 in an article entitled “Vancouver Cable Ten: The Community Access Model”<sup>83</sup> I noted that most production was documentary, because arts production requires more skills and arts documentation had led to conflict with performers’ unions. Individuals and groups accessed Cable Ten either for training or because they genuinely wanted to produce meaningful neighbourhood or issues based programs. In the East Side office, operating on Commercial Drive the staff was extremely supportive of politicized groups like my own collective, Amelia productions (discussed later). In 1983 I argued for a fight against the centralization of access and the closure of neighbourhood offices.<sup>84</sup> Shawn Preus remembers, however, that the fiscal arrangement with Rogers ultimately did not work for professional media makers, “Producers wanted to use Cable for production and only allow two free screenings but Cable wanted unlimited screenings, and began to cut off access”<sup>85</sup>

Jennifer Abbott points out that producers associated with Video In had contradictory relationships to “Television” which she uses a “T” to denote, on one hand pointing out the formal differences and approaches to audience of video art but equally pining after broadcast access.<sup>86</sup> The access battle was lost in the mid-eighties, with some exceptions, such as curated artists shows for speciality channels (TVO, SaskTel, Knowledge Network), international licenses and Bravo Fact (a decade later). My art work distribution and co-production strategy in the late 1980s and early 1990s was in part focused on television licensing.

## Strong Feminist Media Impulses

### Early women’s media groups

The emerging feminist movements gravitated towards video’s playful and flexible qualities (Figure 8). Women’s media groupings, with the exception of Women in Focus, were contingent, yet productive. Reelfeelings aligned former Intermedia women Nomi Kaplan, Barbara Steinman, Mo Simpson, Renee Baert, Ardele Lister, Sara Lee James.

Its members bridged experimental and narrative work. Shawn Preus suggests it operated much like a women's study group, providing emotional support and collaborating on each other's productions. There was humour fun, and a great food.<sup>87</sup> The Women's Media Collective episodically followed grouped around Peg Campbell of the Vancouver School of Art (Emily Carr).<sup>88</sup>

Women in Focus, led by Marian Barling, began at the University of British Columbia as an offshoot of women's office. In the article "Women – Media Manipulation", Barling states, "For women there is a special interest in investigating how consciousness through ideological forms comes about... Since its inception, public broadcasting has been the domain of men."<sup>89</sup> Its goals were broadcast, and "trying to intervene into the education market and bring this voice that was not there, into that whole system because it was predominantly male".<sup>90</sup>

Video In had a clearly articulated feminist agenda which manifested in decades of programming. In a 1980 issue of *Video Guide* guest editor Shawn Preus, "focused on uses of video by feminist individuals and collective efforts. Video has and continues to play an important role for the feminist cause."<sup>91</sup> It featured sister organization Women in Focus, Canadian producers, a memo from women's group in Japan and to provide a less feminist counter point, "4" by Paul Wong.<sup>92</sup> Kate Craig who produced the video residency program at the Western Front supported Canadian and international women artists including my *Heroics* installation. In her own practice she created challenging single-channel tapes about the camera's gaze and proximity to the female body. In *Delicate Issue*, (a pun on tissue) her body is panned, very close up while she asks relentless questions, "At what distance does the camera read?" "Who is willing to be in the frame?" "When do I cut out?" "Volatile and demanding" reviewer Elizabeth Chitty states.<sup>93</sup>

## Amelia Productions

Amelia Productions, a five-woman lesbian-feminist collective, comprised of Billie Carroll, Sarah Davidson, Ellen Frank and Gay Hawley and me, and operated from 1980 – 1982, producing fourteen documentary and fictional works mostly in video, with the occasional film. Amelia was home to intensive social tensions (intra-collective sex) but also grand debates on the nature of representation. The Berwick Street Film Collective's (a group which included feminist Mary Kelly) *The NightCleaners*<sup>94</sup> came out at this time with its interruption of vérité:

*Nightcleaners (Part 1)* is a documentary film about the campaign to unionise the women who cleaned office blocks at night and who were being victimised and underpaid by their employers. It was made by members of the Berwick Street Film Collective (Marc Karlin, Mary Kelly, James Scott and Humphry Trevelyan), who originally intended to make a campaign film but instead were forced to turn to new forms of filmmaking



Figure 8. Hot Chicks on TV, Elizabeth Vander Zaag

*in order to represent the forces at work between the cleaners, the Cleaner's Action Group and the unions – and the complex nature of the campaign itself. The result was an intensely self-reflexive film, which implicated both the filmmakers and the audience in the processes of precarious, invisible labour. It is increasingly recognised as a key work of the 1970s and as an important precursor, in both subject matter and form, to current political art practice.*<sup>95</sup>

In some pieces Amelia sought ways to underscore the constructed nature of its work, create narrative suture in others and feature hyperrealist narrative about women's lives in yet others such as *Hardly and Ending*, directed by Gay Hawley. Amelia was enabled through access to Roger's Cable Ten production facilities and was in part a spin-off of Ellen Frank, Gay Hawley and my episodic involvement in the SFU film program, my communications and history degree studies, and the interests of Press Gang press members in translating text to image. SFU Fine Arts faculty Lisa Steele and Clive Robertson acted as mentors for Billie Carroll and I when we enrolled in their course in 1982.

Amelia's perspectives on video bear similarities to the tactical media movement of the 1990s and early 2000s. We jokingly dubbed our tapes "occupational videos" as these were often shot within occupied buildings (daycare centres and transition houses under threat of closure; the Canada Post office occupied by striking workers; telephone operations at BC Tel occupied by striking workers (Figure 9); the Department of Indian Affairs occupied by 100 indigenous women and children). I have delightful memories of Amelia crews sneaking through police lines, heavy Sony Portapak strapped to our bodies, cameras rolling, confronting angry sheriffs, and bringing messages of solidarity. Amelia was consistently invited inside events when professional media were kept out. We sought the immediacy and power of news coverage without its weight. We were strongly aware that tape depended on the interaction of maker, event and community and would consider questions carefully as these

would construct 'reality'. We would try to respond empirically to events, rather than impose analysis. In looking back at these practices, I believed that, "While the symbolic power of camera evoked a sense of history and identity within the art community, it was the act of collaboration that was meant to empower the 'disenfranchised' in the making of a documentary."<sup>96</sup> Reviewing our work in *Video Guide* Karen Henry notes, "The strike tactics were productive but the main result was that the women came to feel themselves as a capable and powerful force... In relevant political realms the last two tapes would be well received and their technical amateurishness overlooked, for they present ordinary working women who are now finding their common voice."<sup>97</sup>



Figure 9. Amelia Productions inside the occupation of Vancouver BC Tel headquarters by Vancouver Telecommunication Workers Union. Amelia members Billie Carroll, Sarah Davidson, Sara Diamond, and Gary Hawley in image. Photograph by Ellen Frank

In 1983, in part in reaction to the debates inside Amelia I produced the massive installation *Heroics* (Figure 10) in a residency at the Western Front curated by Kate Craig and Tim Guest.<sup>98</sup> It is a six-part installation that was presented in three domestic sets – a living room, kitchen and a foyer that suggested the transition to public space. Interested in the formalizing the interview process, indicating the constructed nature of terms and categories and genuinely producing counter definitions of heroism, I sought out women who were willing to answer the question, "Are you a hero?" Responding to interviewer Lisa Hebert for *Video Guide*, I answered:

*It's not a sociologically accurate piece of work, but it uses some of those social history or scientific methods to ask the same questions to different people and then look at their responses in some kind of consistent way... It does not pretend to be all there is to know about women and their struggles with power.... There are women in society who I believe are more oppressed (such as the farmworkers or homeless woman) and some of*

*them are in the tapes. I tried to give people fairly equal time and allow the viewer to make the judgement. But I think that just by collecting I make my own decision. I did edit for coherency – the work is quite heavily edited.<sup>99</sup>*

I interrupted the narrative flow through imposing colour photos on top of the interviews. The viewer is situated within the comfortable, yet uncomfortable, reproduction of the domestic sets, choosing the stories they want to hear and often conversing with each other in the gaps.

Both *Amelia* and *Heroics* punctuated my larger project, the Women's Labour History Project (Susan Lord has provided an apt reading of my work an intentions in<sup>100</sup>, which, like many of this period was a combination of academic and deeply non-academic experience. I founded the Women's Labour History Project in 1978 while still a student at Simon Fraser University in the History department. I was a labour activist and had been involved in the organization of the Association of Union and College Employees (AUCE - an independent feminist union with a focus on unorganized clerical workers at universities and colleges). I had participated in the organizing drive at UBC and was employed at SFU while attending school in part to solidify the union which had been newly certified. I later helped to lead the union into CUPE.

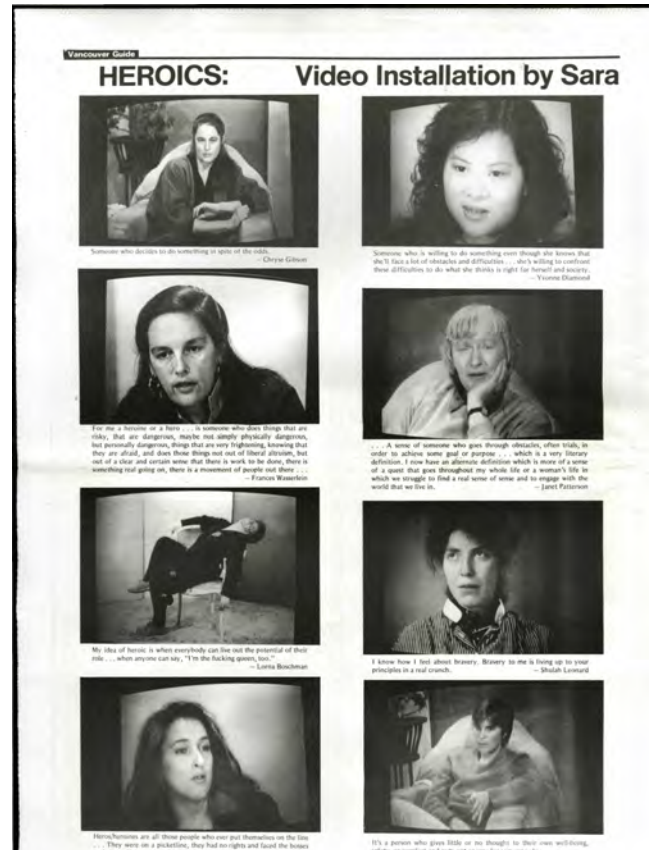


Figure 10. *Heroics* (1984) Sara Diamond, Video Installation (video, furniture, running time 6 hours) Vancouver, B.C.

It was clear to me that there was a dearth of role models, stories, formal histories about women's activities as labour organizers or activists supporting labour or related working class activism (such as British Columbia's powerful union auxiliaries; support for the efforts of the unemployed during the Great Depression, etc.)<sup>101</sup> My intention was both pragmatic and academic. I wanted to create a significant documentation of women activists and create a reference for women and men organizing in contemporary times. I wanted to understand what motivated them and why some women led, others followed and others did not engage. I wanted to understand what impacts their efforts had achieved, what had worked and what had failed. I wanted to understand the ways that women worked in unions and if it was different from the methodologies that men used to exercise power. I wanted to understand demographic factors, such as marital status, race, indigeneity, cultural affiliation. I wanted to understand the role of politics and the various changing positions that parties and/or unions took towards women's right to work, equality, the family and how this played out. It was a big project and once I began it, I worked on and off on the Women's Labour History Project<sup>102</sup>, a not-for-profit company, until 1995 when I completed my last video (for broadcast and independent distribution) *Fit to Be Tied*<sup>103</sup>, about female domestic and agricultural workers in the 1930s.

I began by undertaking an archival search – B.C. Archives, Labour Archives at UBC, BCFL back files, Vancouver Archives etc. and created an annotated bibliography that Press Gang the Vancouver feminist press published.<sup>104</sup> This learning remains relevant in a world of Big Data and meta data description. When I directed the Banff New Media Institute I programmed summits and workshops on the nature of the archive and data base and the challenges of ensuring that 'marginal' contemporary material is protected. It quickly became clear that I would need to augment archival research with oral histories. I was influenced by the British history movements of the time. *The Making of the English Working Class*<sup>105</sup>, a monumental book that uses large scale oral history interviews and quantification to look for trends, shaped how I looked at the research. Debates on the methodologies of interviewing, the directive nature of questions and the actual validity of interviews as documents were raging and these were also formative. This was a time when both post-structuralist (linguistic) and later performative assessments of research processes were under way, assessing both documents and gathered data as subjective, and realizing that all histories are revisionist. As my work rolled out I benefitted tremendously from the very generous environment at Simon Fraser University's History program and in the emerging Women's Studies program. I had the benefit of collegial supervision from the likes of Richard Boyer and Alan Seager, Bryan D. Palmer and Mary Lynn Stewart.

Oral history was not an academic practice in Canada at this time, and the faculty I worked with were willing to let me explore and even learn from my adventures in this new realm. I voraciously read accounts of women's life cycle experience, feminist theories of domestic labour, notions of

cyclical versus linear positivist time - these ideas played out for decades in my practice. As a neo-Marxist feminist with growing interest in semiotics, and the construction of consciousness and subjectivity I had found a sweet spot. Between 1978 and 1991 (including video interviews) I interviewed over one hundred women, using a life history technique, and depositing these audio tapes with the BC Archives, SFU, BC Federation of Labour.<sup>106</sup> I later followed with transcripts for these as these were completed. I collected photographs and other archival materials.

While I was interested in academic writing I was most interested in making the research available to the people whom it could impact. I had dipped my toes into agit pro theatre as a teenager and had studied Bertolt Brecht's<sup>107</sup> writing and plays wanted to apply his methods of constructivism as well as Erwin Piscator's<sup>108</sup> "epic, political, confrontational, documentary" theatre. Although not yet enrolled in art classes I had also been exposed to the activist art and graphic design of the late 1960s and first half of the 1970s and was convinced thanks to Enzenberg that the left and labour movements did not use effective communications tools.

With performance artist and Fine Arts faculty member Bruce Barber's<sup>109</sup> encouragement I jumped headlong into visual art courses, studying with Barber, Jeff Wall<sup>110</sup> (and the entourage of talent he brought through SFU), Lisa Steele and Clive Robertson, and video artist Martha Rosler. Jeff Wall and Bruce Barber educated their students about the Weimer Republic and the Frankfurt School, the practice of John Heartfield, George Grosz, Raoul Hausmann and Hannah Hoch in Berlin Data with its highly interventional performances (Dadaist Franz Jung high jacked a German freighter in the Baltic, commandeering it to Petrograd as a present to Soviet Russia) and photo-montage.<sup>111</sup> According to Kahn, "New objectivity seasoned in locating the relations under the surface real objects, names, of newspaper clippings."<sup>112</sup> Roland Barthes' *Mythologies*<sup>113</sup> – deconstructing the power of advertising appeared to be a powerful modern parallel to the work of Heartfield's. I became increasingly interested in montage from found footage, inspired by Esfir Shub who said, "Magical power of the scissors in the hands of an individual who understands montage".<sup>114</sup> Of particular current relevance in relation to digital art and materiality was the idea of tactility, 'It is at this intersection of intellectual and manual labour where signification is rendered palpable and a handling by the viewer is encouraged; the photomontage's tactilism in the context of photojournalism sets up an homology between the labours of physical and ideological construction at the same time as serving as a model of transgression.'<sup>115</sup>

Through my exposure to the labour movement I self-promoted myself into a job for the building trades travelling around B.C. and gathering footage to compare work, risk and working conditions for all of the trades. I lived in camps, shot high up on catwalks with my Portapak, hung off wrecking balls, crawled around the basement of the converted courthouse that would become the Vancouver Art Gallery and created a 12 part series. It was a crash course in

video making and in the access environment of Vancouver and I was soon drawn into an association with the Video In. In my other world of labour history I began teaching at Capilano College (now university) in the Labour Studies Program in 1983.<sup>116</sup> Teaching union members with different degrees of textual literacy and volumes of media exposure underscored my belief that media materials were of critical importance.

I began to bridge the use of art-based methods, documentary deconstruction and brings these ideas into the newly emerging direction for the Women's Labour History Project – using video art/experimental documentary, installation and art exhibitions as well as several television projects to explore the history of women labour activists in B.C. It became clear that the advent of media had a tremendously disruptive impact on local cultures that women had created as part of community-building and activism. I worked with media footage from the periods we were exploring, at times manipulating it and at times underscoring its propagandistic qualities. We approached women who had provided aural histories and undertook video interviews with them.<sup>117</sup>

We chose to undertake artists' television works because we believed in the Channel Four model, which provided access to experimental work to broadcast audiences. All projects were accompanied by teaching guides and had significant high school distribution. We maintained the broad community focused mandate of earlier media efforts such as Metro Media. *The Lull Before the Storm* was a co-production with the Knowledge Network and it attained international distribution. The four part series included an experimental narrative (working with found footage) as well as script and documentaries that accompanied these stories. In this as with all work our goal was to create pieces that were deconstructive as well as accessible.

It was fascinating to attend the Venice Biennial and experience the intensive focus on capital and labour (work by Isaac Julien formerly of the Black Audio Collective.) and a return to its representation, not only in the narrow fields of artistic production but in an understanding and critique of the world beyond.

### “Lotus Land” - Intense sociality

Let us not forget the parties! The creative scene that emerged in the 1970s was heavily blended into multiple decades of Vancouver's committed party culture. Labelled as “Lotus Land”<sup>118</sup> in the 1970s and 1980s and relatively close to the San Francisco, Vancouver was magnet to gay, lesbian, transsexual and bisexual (queer was not yet in the vocabulary) people, and it had an intense disco club and related drug scene, at least before the incisor teeth of the AIDS crisis bit. Punk music was strong throughout the North west coast, perhaps indicative of the primary industry and industrial base and working class roots of many of its inhabitants. Vancouver spawned successful bands from 1978 through 1980, from Tin Twist (more art oriented), the SubHumans, the hard core punk DOA who were preceded by the Skulls,



Figure 11. Jim Cummins, Punk-A-Roonie, (1981)

the Pointed Sticks, Braineaters, Young Canadians, The Reactors and The Modernettes (Figure 11). The Smilin' Buddha Cabaret<sup>119</sup> on Hastings Street, a few blocks away from the SVES/Video In had hosted the psychedelic San Francisco music scene of the 1960s and became the epicentre of the punk scene. The music scene integrated itself into the emerging video art scene, especially at the Video Inn and Metro Media.<sup>120</sup> Paul Wong describes the “location, location, location” draw of the Video Inn, “There was a coming together of young emerging musicians, fashion designers, the punk scene, the zene scene, who were hungry and eager and certainly with video as a documentation, presentation, stage device and emergence of music video created opportunity.<sup>121</sup> The art scene/party/event culture was in part predicated on club and space rentals because of the city's peculiar licensing laws which reinforced a sense of sub-culture.<sup>122</sup> Drugs - soft, hard, chemical and psychedelic as well as alcohol were consistent features over the decades and found expression in art work, social life and occasional personal crises.

Performance art events added to the mix. Large scale dinner events, building on their family culture, were de rigour at the Western Front and Video In. There were powerful expressions of feminist arts and culture, both straight and lesbian (Commercial Drive was considered to be Lesbian Lane). Scenes often overlapped. Indigenous artist Dana

Claxton was active in the punk and music scene and shares a story of feminist confrontation at a private music event. She recalls, "I was young and developing my voice. I remember I was at the party and you and Kellie were there and they were showing the *Duran Duran* video of the women slithering around in lingerie and you came up to me and said, 'You know these people and have to tell them to shut that off!'; and I went to this guy and said, 'You can't show this video. It's just gross; you are upsetting Kellie and Sara.', and they shut it off!"<sup>123</sup>

### Experiential learning and leaders from inside and outside the academy

DIY experiential learning in Vancouver that occurred outside of the university setting was at times spurred through institutional partnerships (including high schools in the case of the Mainstreeters, and universities, in the case of Intermedia). Artist-run centres were homes to a mix of self-taught and academically trained individuals. In Vancouver, a generation of artists and curators emerged who did not attend art school or university. The lack of post-secondary education in part derived from individuals' working class origins and their lack of resources. Cornelia Wyngaarden explains the importance of access in terms of social class, "Class and circumstance prevented me from coming forward in many situations...I had been wanting to become a film maker but that seemed very remote to me. Once I did get some video production equipment put into my hands by the members of the Video Inn I found it was easy to progress."<sup>124</sup> These self-taught individuals have had a formative intellectual impact, in part because the artist-run centres became sites of theoretical as well as practical knowledge.

The supportive context of the centres provided alternate professional opportunities. In Paul Wong's words:

*I never had a career path. I wasn't doing video to get into theatre. I wasn't doing video to become a music video producer. I wasn't curating to get a job as a curator. I wasn't getting jobs or teaching to get tenure track. I wasn't doing what I was doing to be a feature film director. I wasn't doing one thing to get to two things to get to four things to get my career. This WAS my career. So to have a system that allowed me as much creative freedom as possible was what I had. Networking, exchange, exporting, importing, creative exchange the institution provided so much it just kept evolving and allowed for it and me to grow.*<sup>125</sup>

Karen Knights, now archivist at VIVO (Video In/Out)<sup>126</sup> and a formidable curator and theorist was a photo-finisher in Surrey who decided to take some art and film courses. Letia Richardson, her instructor at Kwantlen College, brought Paul Wong into her class. His collaborative exhibition *Confused: Sexual Views* had just been cancelled by the

Vancouver Art Gallery because its new director Luke Rombaud had declared it as "not art" (because of its pseudo-ethnographic documentary-based approach to exploring sex). Knights found Video In attractive because of its non-institutional nature and the rawness of emerging media art. She recalls:

*The minute that Paul played his tapes I was drawn to the medium...Because Paul came in this state of 'To the ramparts!' It was really appealing! So that was how I came into VIVO; it was not deliberately chosen; I just fell into video art culture...It was not a Desperate Housewives thing... I got totally wrapped up in the nature of what VIVO was because it conveyed a sense of being a place for possibilities. People were doing so many things there, and there was a connection to feminism and social justice issues...It was 1984. I worked with Paul Wong as his Girl Saturday and I would bus in from Surrey and make him coffee while Paul's whole complex scene was unfolding around me. I went on to work with Jeannette Reinhardt on the library and archives.*

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Video In at times played a role in bringing the academy and the artist run movement into one space. For example, the *Vid/Crit* lecture series that I organized had titles such as "In Critical Territory", "Panoptic Video", and "Feminine Abjection: Motion without an End" and included academic speakers. It sought to amplify theoretical and critical assessments of video practice. VIVO also addressed emerging artists studying in college or university. Joe Sarahan ran the *Video Rampage* celebration of emerging video artists. I designed and taught a full twelve-week video art and documentary production and theory course. In 1985 Emily Carr (University of Art and Design) asked me to bring my completely independent twelve-week video production course at the Video In into the art school environment, which is how I began teaching there. There had been occasional video art courses, including one on performance art, video and text taught by Elizabeth Chitty in 1980, but no consistent instruction until this time. The dynamic interchange between formal and informal learning contexts has become far more structured and interview subjects' thoughts on the implication of this are discussed at the end of the essay.

### Pronounced internationalism and engagement with cultural race politics

While the fight for cable access was described as seeking highly local access, from its early roots in the Contemporary Arts Festival, internationalism has been very powerful driver of the media art scene in Vancouver. Christa Dahl believed that the Video In, "...had a lot of contact with Germany, Denmark, France, Spain, Italy, the Yugoslavian area, East Coast of Chile, Argentina, Socio political with Mexico, Japan, SE Asia, Reunion Island off the coast of Africa. We

had a lot of international anti-uranium activists.”<sup>128</sup> The Western Front hosted myriads of international artists through their invitational residency program. The resulting artists’ network was a powerful force in Vancouver and beyond and drove a resonant cultural economy.<sup>129</sup> Vancouver media artists traveled abroad to Japan and Thailand, the former Eastern Europe, Latin America. A decade of *Video Guide* charts their paths.

Video In’s library is home to hundreds of international solidarity and development videos<sup>130</sup> and every issue of *Video Guide* had a strong international focus. International *Video Guide* guest editors from Japan, Thailand and Europe provided detailed histories and reviews. An article (*Video Guide* Volume 8, #1, Issue 36) entitled *Development with Video* by Anuradha<sup>131</sup> described the Indian producers’ group CENDIT who collaborate with the subjects of their programs such as development workers, women activists, union organizers. The tape *Comrades and Bhalyas* (1981) is a workshop on trade unions and migrant labour issues. The video *Dohra Bojh (Double Burden)*, produced in 1981, documents the status of women in villages and traditional values which are counter to education. An issue dedicated to “Cultural Communication” was edited by Karen Henry and included the emerging conflict in Nicaragua, a video foray into the Ecuadorian jungle with the Yanomani, artists’ reports from Japan, and Thailand.<sup>132</sup> Other coverage includes an artists’ peace missions to Russia in which Molly Hogan and colleagues travel the Trans-Siberian railroad exchanging poems with grinning Soviet scientists. *Women, Art and the Periphery/Mujer, Arte, Perifera* curated by writer and video artist Diamela Eltit, curator and critic Nelly Richard and visual artist Lotty Rosenfeld and organized by Video In, the Western Front and Women in Focus included screenings of works by thirteen Chilean women artists and a residency for Lotty Rosenfeld at the Front.<sup>133</sup> In addition, Video In honed its muscles for its decades-long anti-censorship fight through its defence and screening of politicized international documentaries as well as art works.

In the mid to late eighties there was a shift in the discourse around internationalism to link the Canadian context to battles abroad, as racialized artists began to argue for representation within the Canadian art and media worlds. The Video In and *Video Guide* reflected these moves through programming and articles. In 1985 Himani Banerjee’s paper from event *The Heat is On: Women on Art on Sex*, tellingly entitled, “Now You See Us/Now You Don’t” is featured in *Video Guide* by edited by Karen Henry<sup>134</sup>. The series *Asian New World*, curated by Karen Henry and Paul Wong - June 5 – 8, 1987 looked at the diverse practice of artists of Asian descent in North America.<sup>135</sup>

Almost everyone that I interviewed acknowledged that one of the most important provocations that brought the discourse around race and gender into Vancouver’s nebula was the November 15-19, 1989 *Invisible Colours* festival, which was a product of a collaboration between Zainub Verjee, distribution coordinator at Women in Focus and Lorraine Chan of the National Film Board of Canada. Zainub Verjee laughs:

*People ask me why did Invisible Colours happen in Vancouver - it’s because I am there! I am the first woman of colour who Women in Focus hired and very quickly I begin to bring that discourse to the forefront to my work there. We’re talking about mid-1980s...My engagement with this is very much along the lines of culture and technology and the place of race and gender within this discourse, it’s also about how we can construct a national identity in Canada. What is that identity in post-war Canada? I am coming from a discourse of post-colonial [theory] -- I am constantly going to England. I am informed by the Black British Arts movement, Rasheed Areen, Black Audio Film Collective, Keith Piper, David Bailey, Stuart Hall, Marlene Smith...<sup>136</sup>*

Verjee continues with a discussion of the organizational process of bringing the festival to life:

*We raise almost five hundred thousand dollars for a women-of-colour event. And we form alliances with Aboriginal women and it’s within an international movement. All of our money is coming from development agencies; it’s coming from NORAD, CIDA because women’s development in the 3<sup>rd</sup> world is really on the agenda. Those are the people who start funding it, not the Canada Council. There is not a lot of Canadian work. Primarily it is American, and women from fifty-two countries such as Tracey Moffat.<sup>137</sup>*

Verjee’s initiative was not welcomed with open arms. She remembers, “I went to Satellite and [the men] teased me, “What do you think, should we do a festival for men of colour?” I never responded because I felt this is not my fight, I am talking about the whole country. Kate of the Western Front was really behind it.<sup>138</sup>

The festival drew significant international and local audiences. Yasmin Jiwani, writing in the introduction to the catalogue, captures the spirit of its’ concerns:

*At the intersection where race, class, and gender meet stand women of colour. They bear the burden and the brutality of these triple forces of oppression, perpetuated by patriarchy and colonialism...Their toil in the fields and home goes unacknowledged. Their labour is taken for granted and rendered invisible. Yet their images are the most exploited.<sup>139</sup>*

Like some other attempts to bring race politics to predominantly white organizations in the 1990s, there was not a happy ending, resulting in a rupture between *Invisible Colours* and *Women in Focus*, with both organizations dissolving.<sup>140</sup> In the early 1990s ANNPAC, Canada’s artist-run centre association which grouped visual and media arts centres imploded over its failure to effectively integrate racialized artists as creators and administrators, and adopt broader understandings of audience.<sup>141</sup> Representation and equity

remain work in process, requiring structural change in funding support, ongoing lobbying and educational work and shifts in demographics within and outside of the academy, in students, faculty, audiences and boards.

Hank Bull credits Paul Wong's *Racy Sexy* (1989) as another watershed exhibition that forever changed the landscape through forcing a dialogue regarding sex and race.<sup>142</sup> Wong's *Yellow Peril Reconsidered* included twenty-five artists, film, video, and ten shows and represented in Wong's words, "something beyond talking about it; let's see what the Other can do. The Globe and Mail, Canada's national newspaper attacked the show as 'reverse racism'".<sup>143</sup>

Despite fractures at other centres Karen Knights believes that, "Video In tried to be different in its hiring practices, "Video In consciously made sure that there were applicants who applied who were people of colour. Yet the changes made don't always stick. It's about having to be consistently proactive if there becomes a disconnect between the archive and the current practice."<sup>144</sup>

### Indigenous media arts and self-government

Issues of indigenous rights reverberated throughout British Columbia from the 1970s onward. British Columbia is unceded territory with articulate and well-organized communities and organizations with nationalist self-determination agendas and identities. American indigenous politics moved north in the 1970s when American Indian Movement leader Leonard Pelletier's extradition hearings took place in the Vancouver court house (now the Vancouver Art Gallery).

Video In curated and collected video tapes about indigenous issues, a significant number by indigenous makers. Video In became home to unique documentation including rare footage of the Wounded Knee confrontations, *Native American Video Newsreel*, *the Demonstration*, and the B.C. Association of Non-Status Indians council meetings and coverage of the 1978 formation of the World Council of Indigenous Peoples through video and text in *Video Guide*.<sup>145</sup> The 1970s was a time of extreme repression in Latin America. Writing of the risks that indigenous people were taking to create a global network Doug Sanders informs readers that delegates at the Port Alberni conference faced imprisonment and torture upon their return home.<sup>146</sup> The late artist and documentary maker Mike MacDonald was a Micmac Indian who spent many years in remote British Columbia with his camera, in the Nass Valley, North, Central and West Coasts, Skeena and Stikine Rivers. In 1985 he gathered his documentation into a remarkable work at Video In – *Electronic Totem*, a pole of monitors as monumental as Nam June Paik's installations.<sup>147</sup>

Kristen L. Dowell's research had examined the ways that the potent indigenous media arts community in British Columbia did more than provide new insights on indigenous experience, "Aboriginal media is more than merely expressive of Aboriginal stories and indigenous cultural traditions, but is constitutive of Aboriginal social and kinship relationships".<sup>148</sup> Loretta Todd, writing in the Fall 1987 *Video*



Figure 12. Dana Claxton, *Cable Four*, Vancouver (1982)

*Guide* in an article entitled, "Native Video in B.C." builds on this concept. She notes that white cultural missionaries brought video to indigenous communities believing native people would join the global village, ignoring traditional forms of preservation that communities had maintained. They inappropriately turned cameras on the perceived exotica of dances, culture, and history. However, in Todd's mind, a positive by-product was that indigenous producers realized that video was affordable; developed communications networks and education, and media an educational tool in the struggle for self-government.<sup>149</sup>

I first met indigenous artist, activist and theorist Dana Claxton (Figure 12) through the punk scene, further testimony to the mixing of sub-cultures of Vancouver in the late 1970s and early 1980s. She recalls that:

*At that time, I was fresh off a farm in Rosedale, B.C. where I had my beautiful garden and canned food and moving into the city and becoming part of the music and art scene. There were a few First Nations people in the punk scene. I'd not become an Anarchist I did not take on the uniform...I went to tons of demos, anti-nuke, operation solidarity. I remember my neighbour saying why are you going (to hear that band) you don't look like any of the women in the poster?<sup>150</sup>*

Claxton describes the growth of the indigenous media environment:

*How I got into media at all was through the Shelicum Native Indian Television News on Cable Four in the mid-1980s. We were all amateurs - it was pre-APTN (Aboriginal People's Television Network). The idea was to train indigenous people in television production, and we were trying to learn. There was an ad in the Sun; you had to be a woman, disabled; or First Nations. I qualified for a few of them. It was a training program that you got paid for. Shelicum Media was founded by Larry Guno and he was a Nishga lawyer who was*

very active in Nishga politics. It was my induction into Indian politics because we were covering land claim politics. It was an incredible experience and it politicized me completely. He was also a survivor of residential schools and later he wrote a play because they were all called by numbers. He wrote a play about it. That was in the 1980s. Loretta Todd and Leonard George and Mary Anne Jones (the young actress on the Beach Combers) started the Chief Dan George Media School, which eventually morphed in the Indigenous Film Making program at Capilano University.<sup>151</sup>

Claxton continues:

*Once Indians were allowed to go to university, they went into law and education for obvious reasons – art and film school were a luxury really. A lot of people went to Spirit Song. It lasted for at least a decade or so, it was a really important place and through Native Ed they were eventually accredited. We were in the black box below Women in Focus and if you had a creative spirit it was a foundational place for people to come and experiment.<sup>152</sup> We would do play writing and then I turned my plays into my short films, The Red Paper, and my performance media came out of Spirit Song.<sup>153</sup> (Figure 13)*

In the same immediate vicinity to Spirit Song were the Native Associations, nicknamed “the Broadway Seven”. These institutions provided services for urban indigenous people and the Salish and BC Indians, United Native Nations. Claxton notes that they also operated as granting agencies, providing mini grants for documentary productions.<sup>154</sup>The Video In’s First Nations Access Program was created in the 1992, initiated by Margo Kane, Zachary Longboy and me, and while located and supported by the Video In functioned as a self-governed autonomous entity producing six works over three years.<sup>155</sup>

### Interdisciplinary collaboration: computer arts

Inspired by the American Electronic Art and Technology (E.A.T.) and its relationship with Bell Labs, Intermedia became an early site of experimentation with computer art, with a focus on sound. In the early 1970s holographic artist and film maker Al Razutis and Jim Armstrong built an analogue video-synthesizer with a 16 channel quantizer that they nick-named Feliz, which was capable of “color video synthesis”(video feedback, a combination of film and video, and audio modulation of the video signal).<sup>156</sup>Al Razutis and Gary Lee Nova experimented in the creation of a number of bio-feedback, video-feedback, film and video ‘hybrid’ experiments at Visual Alchemy, Razutis’ studio. Inspired by Antonin Artaud’s Theatre of the Absurd and using his own body as experimental subject matter, Razutis submitted to



Figure 13. Dana Claxton, The Red Paper (1996) Installation: 16 mm film (black and white), with sound; 6 hand carved chairs; faux gilded frame. Running time 13:49 minutes.

prolonged electro shock which he documented in living colour.<sup>157</sup> His 1972-1976 biofeedback (brain wave) experiments *Synapse*, *Waveform Compilation*, *Videographics* were broadcast live on Channel 10. Razutis had been known for his structuralist film work. He now began to combine film with synthesized colour video. According to Razutis when he offered his “Feliz” synthetic kit to the Western Front they rejected its output as impure, corrupting the technical qualities of video tape<sup>158</sup>. By the time he left Canada after his confrontation with Kaja Silverman and Patricia Gruben in the SFU film department<sup>159</sup> over feminism, post-structuralism and narrative, the Western Front performed a volte face and according to Razutis asked to adopt Feliz, he instead shipped it to Ontario.<sup>160</sup>

Corry Weingaarden recalls that the Western Front provided opportunities for artists to learn about computer science, “Bob Richards aka Spencer Kathy was an American draft dodger (and an expert on submarine technology who had slept beside nuclear missiles). He worked at the Western Front and helped set up the beginnings of their electronic media. I learned what a motherboard was although the workings were still a mystery.”<sup>161</sup> Richards ran a series of lectures on computer programming that I recall attending.

Elizabeth Vander Zaag played a significant role as artist and teacher of computer-based approaches and effects. She had studied at University of Western Ontario, taught at Simon Fraser University and worked at the CBC as an early digital video operator. By the late seventies artists sought computer effects. Video Guide was an important source of technical information. In the 1978 Summer edition in an article entitled “Digital Video Details” she discusses managing the gap between computer graphics and raster screen images from video, “Keying the computer image with a sync generator onto a video camera image results in a direct method of montaging computer images onto video tape. They keyed computer lines could accentuate the video image and could be used to supply detail to a composite picture... Computer animations or interpolated drawings can

also be transcribed to videotape as a succinct form in itself.<sup>162</sup>

The *Digit* series were an interstitial feature on John Anderson's Gina Show produced weekly for community television.<sup>163</sup> Digit, a cartoonlike figure had animated adventures with titles such as *Digit Goes To Hawaii-1978*, *Digit Responds-1978*, *Digit Does the Dishes-1979*, *Digit Reproduces-1978*, *Digit Leaves-1978*, *TLC-1985*, *Digit Recalls The Future-1979*. *Baby Eyes* created by Vander Zaag in 1983 used video processing using Japanese artist Ko Nakajima's "aniputer" a machine that allowed the user to draw on the video electronically. The womb and world outside's filmic space are flipped as baby POV through graphic effects. In the late 1980s the Western Front had some basic computer tools for artists but these were not available elsewhere in Vancouver. Cornelia Wyngaarden notes that the Amiga would change this, allowing image manipulation, graphics and effects. Vander Zaag was convinced artists and media makers needed the tools and the related skills. She states, "After teaching electronic cinema and video at Simon Fraser University in 1993, I started a multimedia school for artists funded by HRDC called Western Front Multimedia."<sup>164</sup> Vander Zaag founded and led Front Multimedia (1990-1993) which offered courses in computer art and graphics. She continued to explore femininity using humour and computational tools for many years. *Talk Nice* (which I exhibited at the Banff Centre) uses Vander Zaag's voice recognition software *SAY (Speak and Yell)*, developed at the Western Front Multimedia in the mid-1990s to allow audiences to emulate and interact with uppisms, typical of teenage girl talk.<sup>165</sup> Curator Karen Henry's *Phosphorous Diode* show of 1985 was important because it showed image manipulation, layering and intercutting by video artists that was only possible with computer graphics processing.<sup>166</sup>

Computer art found an important home at Simon Fraser University. Barry Truax, Martin Gotfried, Doug Collinge, and Jerry Barenholtz connected Simon Fraser, UBC and the University of Victoria. Barry Truax was a composer, creating with the PODX computer music system, and author of the Handbook of Acoustic Ecology for the World Soundscape Project.<sup>167</sup> Gotfried pointed out that graphics were far more computationally demanding hence early experimentation occurred with audio.<sup>168</sup> Tom Calvert who led computer science had a long-standing interest in art and technology. Thecla Schiphorst and he began a collaboration in the 1980s that would last for many years. Schiphorst was teaching programming at Douglas College and programmed for a living while she was studying dance at Simon Fraser. She had been fearful of revealing her programming skills to the dance program lest they think that she was not a serious dancer. She had a moment of revelation when, "In my last undergraduate year I was passing the computer science area and I saw someone working with a wooden doll where they were bending the joints, and he had a PDP 11<sup>169</sup> and he was doing something with this stick figure and it was not quite dance. It turned out he was working with Dr. Tom Calvert. In the middle of this I had this aha moment, oh my God, I realized you needed programming but I thought the dance

knowledge I have, the embodied knowledge is so much more technical than my computing knowledge and nobody has ever thought of building a bridge before these two technical forms of knowledge. It was this moment that changed my life...So I told him [Tom Calvert] that I wanted to do this project in my movement analysis course where we were working Laban analysis -- so I had to program and use my movement analysis training.

She continues:

*As a graduate student I began working with Tom Calvert and Merce Cunningham - exploring technology. We had Lifeforms<sup>170</sup> running on this MacIntosh computer. Part of that exploration was the promise of how technology could be a catalyst [for] how we might ask constructive questions like, 'what could new movement be'? For Merce it was all the mistakes he could make in using the computer -- what became a polyphonic fast paced sometimes robotic movement which began to be used for movement by many young choreographers, not always using the computer... It had to do with asking ourselves who were we and what our bodies are and this relationship between meaning and meaning-making."<sup>171</sup>*

Schiphorst describes her own choreographic responses:

*I became interested in impossible dances, things that were physically impossible but left you exploring access to gravity, ways of moving the body in angles the body could not do, or the timing was so abrupt and polyphonic in way that would blow up the time line. It gave you an altered reflection of the human body and its capability."<sup>172</sup>*

She began to extend dance beyond the body, anticipating the Internet of Things:

*There was a chair and just because you could I mapped a beautiful movement phrase onto the chair, and the chair was doing strange things, falling over and upside down but there was something about the meaning of a dance phrase that was not lost, even though the model was a chair. It was discovering intelligences in movement itself that are perhaps tactic or may implicit or just hidden and when revealed may be uncomfortable."<sup>173</sup>*

With the Image and Sound Research Institute Schiphorst created a CD Rom based on interaction with large quantities of Cunningham's data from his movement archive, in ways that were "associative, combining a random process with some of Merce's and John Cage's compositional technique."<sup>174</sup>

Schiphorst discusses the tone of the work:

*We had an I-Ching generator; it has a relationship with serendipity, and browsing. I was interested in alternative forms that are soft, elliptical, surprising; values around forgiveness, mistake, ways non-hierarchical structures to access data in different ways and relationships between data and embodiment, make your mouth water, or you perspire or your heart pump.*<sup>175</sup>

These efforts emerged into the Computer Arts Intensive at Simon Fraser University. In the early 1990s John Crawford of Discovery Park and Schiphorst with colleagues Martin Gottfried and Sang Mah began SFU's summer computer arts intensives which were "large sandboxes using Midi, sensors, Max MSP and play between analog and digital".<sup>176</sup> It included George Lewis, Louise Nevelson, Louis P. Demers and Bill Vorn, Pauline Olivera and many others. I provided historical and theoretical perspective. The workshop included prototypes and performances.

Schiphorst describes the pedagogy of the workshop as:

*...very improvisational and exploratory... previous pedagogical models would not have suited the principle of discovery based on this concept of interaction between the analogue and the world of sensors. It came before organizational thought on how to map process. We had been using MAX to connect Lifeforms with sound. We saw that this could be used for performance but there was enough of a beginning of digital tools and you could create some libraries for others to use... Technology was brittle and there were ideological concepts of engineering process requiring structures, time frames and we blew up concept of engineering process...The other thing that we did which was every morning we held movement sessions and everybody moved and different people led the sessions and the concept was that you had to create this as part of the technology design process...There is a kind of ambient soft listening where you are receiving rather than focusing inwards, with movement how you see, how you use the eye, it create a different state in the body. These are technical aspects of improvisation, in how we direct our attention, you can map in different ways. If you use that to produce not only the works but the design of technology to integrate into methodologies, there is a structure and there are rules.*<sup>177</sup>

SFU curtailed its funding of the workshops in 1994 and the Computer Arts Intensive then moved on to the Western Front for several years before it ended. Schiphorst became an installation artist exploring ways for audiences to "enter the liminal space".<sup>178</sup>

Schiphorst and Sang Mah with Tom Calvert's support organized the second International Conference on Dance and

technology at the CISR, with telepresence with Merce Cunningham, with Colin Griffins was the technical support person. The conference represented a threshold in dance practice according to Schiphorst:

*People were impassioned and upset about this relationship of body and technology side by side... There was a CNN reporter in an interview with Merce in 1991 who said that technology was coming to the rescue of choreographers and I said, 'Well actually maybe choreographers are coming to the rescue of technology'. We were disruptive.*<sup>179</sup>

## The fight against censorship

Vancouver was home to lightning rod debates, crises and confrontations about sexuality and sexual images. These formed around the Red Hot Video (a port outlet) picket lines, became a battle between and among feminists, artists, librarians, and civil libertarians regarding censorship with crucible moments being the cancellation (and defacto censorship) of *Confused, Sexual Views* by the VAG; the fight against restrictive provincial content regulation and screening and Canada Customs.

In 1984 Luke Rombout, the director of the Vancouver Art Gallery, at the eleventh hour, cancelled the installation of a commissioned work entitled *Confused: Sexual Views*, produced by Gary Bourgeois, Gina Daniels, Jeannette Reinhardt and Paul Wong, overriding the lead curator Joanne Bernie-Danzker. Rombout. The installation used a direct to camera documentary survey mode in which individuals spoke to the camera about their attitudes towards sex. Rombout proclaimed the works as "Not Art", and feared it would offend audiences and bring down the wrath of the criminal code.

The "Tattletapes" column in the Video Guide captured the response of the media arts community:

*This outrageous action has instigated an explosion of controversy like this city has never seen...the specific incident has only been the tip of the iceberg, or rather ice pick, that has driven in the wedge, factionalized the arts community, and has brought to a boil the traditional versus the media arts, the activist versus the complacent artist, the politicized, the non-art for art's sake, and the avant-garde – a discussion long overdue in this city.*<sup>180</sup>

The Canadian media art community was immersed in battles against the Ontario Censorship Board who had closed down *Not a Love Story*<sup>181</sup> (a film critical of pornography) as well as a number of artists' works.

In a Video Guide article, "Clear About Confused" I noted that the "Not Art" argument was specious as the ironic use of a semi-documentary format of installation fitted into 15 years of video art. Use of interviews and quasi-sociological

material, had also been part of Wong's praxis.<sup>182</sup> The Vancouver Artists League called for a boycott of the Vancouver Art Gallery; for the Vancouver for to write letters of protest; organize salons de refuse; encourage galleries to bring the work to their city. Artists organized a mass rally at the Vancouver Art Gallery Annual General Meeting and were successful in achieving positions on the institution's board. Wong unsuccessfully took the VAG to court. It was a downturn of the relationship between media arts and the Vancouver Art Gallery that would take years to heal. Wong eventually had a retrospective curated by Chief Curator Daina Augaitis<sup>183</sup>.

The debate regarding pornography and state intervention was heating up in society and the feminist community - art works by gays and lesbians, alternate educational material about youth sexuality and erotic were targeted by Canada Customs and provincial censors and federal courts. In November of 1985 British Columbia's Attorney General Brian Smith proposed sweeping regulation of all video materials and received support from Women Against Violence Against Women (WAVAW), the Anglican Church, and the Vancouver Council of Women. The proposed legislation did not propose protection for tapes by artists or for artist-run centres or galleries. The Vancouver Artists' League was the only group to argue against the legislation which was Bill 30, the British Columbia Motion Pictures Act<sup>184</sup>. Pending legislation, and the experience of artist-run galleries and gay and lesbian bookstores Varda Burstyn initiated the publication of *Women Against Censorship* edited by Douglas & McIntyre and included my writing and Lisa Steele.<sup>185</sup> Women in Focus also came out against censorship.

The fight was on and the strategy was to curate alternate works about sex in the video format for both education and provocation. From November 29 – December 1<sup>st</sup>, 1985 *The Heat is On: Women on Art on Sex*, organized by Sara Diamond, Karen Henry, Pat Fiendel, Caffyn Kelly Kellie Marlowe was hosted by Women in Focus. Screenings and panels included "Sex Tapes: Dealing with Desire: A Screening of Recent work by Women artists". Panel One: "Coming Together or Coming Apart, the Social and Political Meaning of Sexual Images", Panel Two: "The Objecting Object: Women and The Art of Sex", included Sue Golding, Varda Burstyn. Screening of *In the Dark* by Kim Tomczak and Lisa Steele an uncut longshot of their love-making with the artists narrating their sexual and emotional history live to audience in the foreground.<sup>186</sup>Etc. pg 204

The Vancouver Artists' League initiated the Coalition for the Right to View (CRTV) in December, 1985 under the banner, "Educate, don't legislate!" to fight not only provincial legislation but Canada Customs and extensions of the Criminal Code, for whom I was the spokesperson.<sup>187</sup> In my words:

*The Coalition brings together feminists, artists, video producers, writers, gay and lesbian organizations, independent video distributors, academics, civil libertarians and concerned individuals, who believe that censorship of video is the wrong solution to the complex problem of violence*

*against women and children and violent pornography... We are angry that the provincial government cut back on services to women and children who are victims of sexual abuse and violence, but puts resources into censoring images instead. We need sex education, social services, and alternate imagery.*<sup>188</sup>

Karen Knights and I followed *The Heat is On* with *Visual Evidence* multi-month series entitled of multimedia events about sexuality and sexual Images at Video Inn, Pitt International Galleries, Women in Focus, Heritage Hall, Western Front. Again both education and provocation it included an evening curated by "Double Jeopardies: Gender and Race" curated by Richard Fung; a session entitled, "Information: Young Artists and Sexuality" curated by Megan Baxter, and a workshop for sex educators on the use of alternate erotic and artists' videos, "Learning to Talk about Sex: recent approaches regarding sex education". Two porn production workshops, one for gay men and one for women drew few men and many women. I plied the radio talk show circuit arguing against the legislation and challenging the government to take us on.

In June of 1987 Mary-Lou McCausland of BC Film Classification Branch declared that:

*...She was aware that the cultural event Visual Evidence was not submitting video material for classification...that it was important that artists be free to explore and be creative, regardless of the results of their explorations and creativity...that her office was prepared to exempt the series from the classification process.*<sup>189</sup>

This represented a significant victory for artist-run centres and public galleries showing video art and documentary.

A final note: on the cusp of the 1990s was the Gay Games which Vancouver hosted. R.E.A.L. women and B.C.'s strong fundamentalist churches were vocally opposed to the games, threatening violent intervention. Karen Knights and I curated two packed out nights of gay and lesbian videos, with the perky title *Sodom North: Bash Back*. Joe Sarahan produced a Bash Back tee shirt. Paul Wong remembers that even the right backed off when they saw the amount of money flowing into Vancouver through the games.<sup>190</sup>

In 1986 independent curators Daina Augaitis and Karen Henry (in part on the heels of the censorship of *Confused Sexual Views*) created the massive *Luminous Sites* featuring Ian Carr-Harris, Kate Craig, Max Dean, Vera Frenkel, Randy & Berenizzi, Tomiyo Sasaki, Barbara Steinman, David Tomas, Paul Wong, and Cornelia Wyngaarden. It was a showcase of contemporary video and digital media installation strategies and the most significant show of its kind to date in Canada, "We sought to explore video as an active, multi-faceted principle in the sculptural environment." Pg.<sup>191</sup> They added that in the post-modern context, it constituted, "a desperate search through stores of comfortable but worn-out paradigms to find a relevant process by which to assign meaning."

The mid-eighties were a critical moment for video art with a curator at the National Gallery of Canada and acquisitions in major museums and a growing wave of festivals. Paul Wong was skeptical, “Outsiders stories from the margins were not wanted by the museum and they embraced nebulous pretty loop things that you could engage as a painting. So there was a certain form of an aesthetics that took place instead of work that was edgy, or radical.”<sup>192</sup> Video art had emerged in significant part outside of the academy and the gallery system. The utopian moment had long passed. New media would come next.

### Carry forward

I asked my interview subjects what they thought the important Karen Knights underscores the importance of tactical curation in the context of political exigency:

*All of the stuff I curated was thematic usually around some issue that interested me; it was about getting information out around an issue that was topical that I felt needed to be explored by the community. I could be exposed to new work somewhere, come back to Vancouver and create an event right away. Quick and dirty...*<sup>193</sup>

She cautioned that curatorial spontaneity has ended and with it the capacity to use curation as response.

Hank Bull underscored the importance of artist-run organizations on the West Coast, stating:

*Art institutions, and especially artist-run centres, are social sculptures in which every participant plays a part in the collective construction of meaning. This is what makes culture. In Vancouver, I believe it was the artist initiated institutions and practices that had the most significant impact in the 1970s-1990s. Hundreds of artists have benefited directly. Some have gone on to successful international careers. Less visible, and just as valuable, is the contribution these centres have made in many small ways, over a long time, to the texture of life in Vancouver. Perseverance furthers. Another thing these organizations have done is to remove the differences and hierarchies that used to separate artist, technician, critic, curator, historian, patron, and administrator and so on.*<sup>194</sup>

Cornelia Wyngaarden also noted the critical role that artist-run-centres play in Vancouver’s history, “The most important result/lessons was that artist run media centres will deliver both exciting new art forms and critical thinking if public funding bodies trust their operating procedures without interference.”<sup>195</sup>

Bull saw models for contemporary resistance cultures in the history of artist-run-centres because of their capacity to collaborate and build networks. He notes that:

*...they presage the growth of today’s grass roots movements – such as Idle No More, Occupy and so many others around the world – that are largely enabled and facilitated by social media. These still incoherent expressions of desire for political change are signs that a re-organization of the way people make decisions about environment, income distribution and society is on the way. The forays into networking, telecommunications, and artist directed media production that took place in Vancouver in the 1970s and 1980s are very interesting to look back on. It’s as if these artists saw it coming.*<sup>196</sup>



Figure 14. Thecla Schiphorst, Lecture on Somaesthetics, HCI, design and interactive art. Visualization Laboratory, College of Architecture, Texas A&M University. March 26, 2012.

Thecla Schiphorst (Figure 14) believes that the interdisciplinary exchange and practice which was consistent through four decades of West Coast culture remains a valid necessity:

*Artifact results and methodological results – how do you build a bridge between epistemologies of practice?” She insists that technology invention needs to look at the “qualitative self...not the quantitative, the human state machine, what other things should we monitor, what time frame, can it be smaller, nonsensical, this notion of mistake and forgiveness, how can tech respond, can there be liminality?” She believes that we need to “listen, think, listen and we may discover things. There is much to listen to, including ourselves.”<sup>197</sup>*

Dana Claxton reminds us that cultural politics sit within the social. She says, “I tell my students, its beyond politics, think about it as being something about the everyday that has to do with how you are governed and how other people are governed, don’t use the “p” word”.

These pages are a reminder that we need epistemic change, activism and models to take us into the future.

Louis Althusser writing in and “Ideological State Apparatuses: Notes Towards an Investigation” in *Video Culture, A Critical Investigation 1986* in his section on “Descriptive Theory as Such”, validates the importance of detailed description (thick one could argue) to unearth dynamics and contradictions, “... “descriptive theory”: this the first phase of every theory, at least in the domain which concerns us (that of social formations)...one must envisage this phase as a transitional one, necessary to the development of the theory.” ... precisely as an effect of this “contradiction,” a development of the theory which goes beyond the form of “description”.<sup>198</sup>

These are the descriptive, empirical soundings from Vancouver’s past that echo to-day:

1. Intensive and productive radicalization – left-coast and counter-culture, Marxism, labour, feminisms;
2. Episodic yet deep partnerships between formal and alternative institutions—University of British Columbia (UBC), Vancouver School of Art (Emily Carr), Simon Fraser University (SFU), Vancouver Art Gallery; Cable Television, Canada Council for the arts;

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Coined by Vancouver Sun writer Allan Fotheringham, Lotusland refers to Homer’s *Odyssey*, in which the hero, Odysseus, visits a land whose inhabitants are befuddled by a narcotic lotus (the “Land of the Lotus-Eaters”). It sometimes is used to describe all of British Columbia. See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicknames\\_of\\_Vancouver](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicknames_of_Vancouver).

<sup>2</sup> <http://grunt.ca/exhibitions/mainstreeters-taking-advantage/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.vancouverartinthesixties.com/>

<sup>4</sup> <http://grunt.ca/>

<sup>5</sup> Martha Rosler (1990) “Shedding the Utopian Moment”, in Ed, Hall and Fifer *Illuminating Video: An Essential Guide to Video Art*, New York, 1990

<sup>6</sup> Martha Rosler (1990) “Shedding the Utopian Moment”, in Ed, Hall and Fifer *Illuminating Video: An Essential Guide to Video Art*, New York, 1990 quoted in Sara Diamond (1991) “Daring Documents: The Practical Aesthetics of Early Vancouver Video” in Stan Douglas, ed., *Vancouver Anthology: The Institutional Politics of Art*. Vancouver. Vancouver: Or Gallery. 53-88

<sup>7</sup> Nancy Shaw (1991) “Expanded Consciousness and Company Types: Collaboration Since intermedia and NE thing company” in Stan Douglas, Ed, *Vancouver Anthology*, Vancouver: Or Gallery. pg 91

<sup>8</sup> Hank Bull transcript, July, 2015.

<sup>9</sup> Hans Magnus Enzenberger (1974) *The Consciousness Industry*. London: Continuum Books.

<sup>10</sup> Alvin Gouldner (1976) *The Dialectic of Ideology and Technology*. New York: The Seabury Press.

<sup>11</sup> Sara Diamond (1991) “Daring Documents: The Practical Aesthetics of Early Vancouver Video” in Stan

3. Powerful autonomous/semi-autonomous artists’ organizations which exist to this day;
4. Early campaigns for mass media inclusion;
5. Strong feminist media impulses;
6. “Lotus Land”<sup>1</sup>
7. Experiential learning and leaders from inside and outside the academy
8. Pronounced internationalism and engagement with cultural race politics;
9. Indigenous media arts expression built on strong indigenous self-government;
10. Interdisciplinary collaboration: computer arts;
11. Anti-censorship

## Acknowledgments

I gratefully acknowledge the generosity of my interview subjects, and the creative and editorial support of my colleagues at The International Symposium of Electronic Arts, 2015.

Douglas, ed., *Vancouver Anthology: The Institutional Politics of Art*. Vancouver Vancouver: Or Gallery. 53-88

<sup>12</sup> See Douglas Kahn and Diane Neumaier, eds. (1985) *Cultures in Contention*. Seattle: The Real Comet Press.

<sup>13</sup> Ernest Mandel (1975) *Late Capitalism*. London: Humanities Press

<sup>14</sup> Terry Eagleton (1976) *Criticism and Ideology*. London: Verso.

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.iep.utm.edu/frankfur/>

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.vancouverartinthesixties.com/>

<sup>17</sup> Dana Claxton Interview, July, 2015. She is referring to the video pornography rental store that was picketed by feminists and Christian groups for their sexually explicit and violent pornography. In a highly polarizing act The Wimmin’s Fire Brigade eventually firebombed the store, in collaboration with the Squamish Five. <https://ran-com.wordpress.com/2011/10/08/the-wimmins-fire-brigade/>. I discuss the debates regarding pornography and censorship later in the text.

<sup>18</sup> Kate Craig (1983) “Personal Perspectives”, *Vancouver: Art and Artists 1931-1983*. ed., Luke Rombout. Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery. 261-262

<sup>19</sup> <http://nativebrotherhood.ca/>

<sup>20</sup> Keith Wallace (1991) “A Particular History: Artist-Run Centres in Vancouver”, in Stan Douglas, Ed. *Vancouver Anthology: The Institutional Politics of Art*. Vancouver. Pg. 30

<sup>21</sup> Tresa Randall (2012) Hanya Holm. Dance Heritage Coalition [http://www.danceheritage.org/treasures/holm\\_es-say\\_randall.pdf](http://www.danceheritage.org/treasures/holm_es-say_randall.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.vancouverartinthesixties.com/>, *ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> The New Design Gallery was a result of Jack Shadbolt, John Koerner and Abraham realizing no commercial gallery in Vancouver.

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.vancouverartinthesixties.com/>, *ibid.*

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<sup>25</sup> Poet and CBC exec Jane Rule, UBC Fine Arts Gallery Direct Alvin Balkind, and architect Abraham Rogotnick started the Arts Club (private clubs were a licensing requirement in B.C. until recently). <http://www.vancouver-artinthesixties.com/>, *ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.vancouverartthesixties.com/> see image of the chronology

<sup>27</sup> Nancy Shaw notes the importance of Simon Fraser University and David Thompson University Centre in Nelson, “Interdisciplinary and collaborative practices were instituted as pedagogical doxa in the creative arts departments of British Columbia’s two new universities.... These liberal institutions... wanted to disrupt the notions of individual artistic genius and the kinds of object-making favoured by museums and markets.” in Stan Douglas, Ed, *Vancouver Anthology: The Institutional Politics of Art*. Vancouver: Or Gallery. Pg. 93-4

<sup>28</sup> Nancy Shaw (1991) “Expanded Consciousness and Company Types: Collaboration Since intermedia and NE thing company” in Stan Douglas, Ed, *Vancouver Anthology: The Institutional Politics of Art*. Vancouver: Or Gallery. Pg. 93-4

<sup>29</sup> Crista Dahl interview, July, 2015.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* pg. 94

<sup>31</sup> Linda Johnson (1973) *Metro media and hourglass* CBC Doctoral Thesis, pg 110

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* pg. 111

<sup>33</sup> Sara Diamond (2000) “Turn that Camera Inside Out: Some Thoughts about Synaesthesia” In Jennifer Abbot, Ed, *Making Video In: the Contested Ground of Alternate Video on the West Coast*. Vancouver: Video In Studios

<sup>34</sup> Crista Dahl interview, July 2015. Some of these new organizations were predicated on groups of individuals who had strong social ties through relationships who converged to some extent around formations, New Era Social Club (Kate Craig and Eric Metcalfe were married) to the Western Front, and Mainstreeters – many of whom had been close friends through high school to Video In/SVES.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> Crista Dahl interview, July, 2015.

<sup>37</sup> Shawn Preus interview, 1990.

<sup>38</sup> Shawn Preus, Interview 1990

<sup>39</sup> Later artist-run centres continued to proliferate in Vancouver, such as the Or, Contemporary Art Gallery, Unit/Pitt (1980), Grunt (1984) – still in operation.

<sup>40</sup> For example Doris Shabolt brought in Evelyn Roth, who crocheted a cover for the front of the gallery with videotape. At this time Eric Metcalfe (Dr. Brute) painted the front of the gallery with leopard spots.

<sup>41</sup> <http://www.vancouverartthesixties.com/> *ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> Jennifer Abbott, ed., *Making Video In: the Contested Ground of Alternate Video on the West Coast*. (Vancouver: Video In Studios, 2000)

<sup>43</sup> *Daring Documents* Vancouver Anthology

<sup>44</sup> Paul Wong interview, July, 2015.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> Paul Wong interview July, 2015.

<sup>47</sup> Paul Wong interview July, 2015.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Curated by Daina Augaitus and Karen Henry this exhibition included Ian Carr-Harris, Kate Craig, Max Dean, Vera Frenkel, Randy & Bereniccì, Tomiyo Sasaki, Barbara Steinman, David Tomas, Paul Wong, Cornelia Wyngaarden and was a major intervention meant to build museum and public awareness of video art. See Video Guide, Volume 8 #2, Issue 37 for catalogue coverage and reviews.

<sup>50</sup> See Assembly of B.C. Arts Council newsletter for details of Strategies for Survival.

<http://www.artsbc.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/1986jan-feb.pdf>

<sup>51</sup> Hank Bull Interview July, 2015

<sup>52</sup> Zainub Verjee Interview July, 2015. Also see <http://www.paarc.ca/>

<sup>53</sup> Kate Craig, “Personal Perspective” In Vancouver: Art and Artists 1931-1983,” Luke Rombout, Ed., (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 1983) 261-262

<sup>54</sup> See Patrick Ready’s <http://residence.aec.at/vehicle/fresh/hpstory/page1.html> for details on the genesis and highlight of the program which ran for eight years. Also available through the Western Front Archives <http://front.bc.ca/events/the-hp-radio-show/>

<sup>55</sup> Hatoum undertook a number of residencies at the Western Front. A description of the video as follows, *Measures of Distance* is a video work comprising several layered elements. Letters written by Hatoum’s mother in Beirut to her daughter in London appear as Arabic text moving over the screen and are read aloud in English by Hatoum. The background images are slides of Hatoum’s mother in the shower, taken by the artist during a visit to Lebanon. Taped conversations in Arabic between mother and daughter, in which her mother speaks openly about her feelings, her sexuality and her husband’s objections to Hatoum’s intimate observation of her mother’s naked body are intercut with Hatoum’s voice in English reading the letters. <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/hatoum-measures-of-distance-t07538>

<sup>56</sup> Zainub Verjee interview, July 2015.

<sup>57</sup> See Craig A. Saper *Networked Art*. (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2001) for early discussions regarding performance and networks. See the site *Networked Performance* for an impressive archive of networked art. [http://archive.turbulence.org/blog/archives/cat\\_tactical\\_media.html](http://archive.turbulence.org/blog/archives/cat_tactical_media.html) Futherfield’s recent exhibition represents a continuation of these practices. <http://furtherfield.org/netbehaviour/networked-art-places-between-places>

<sup>58</sup> Hank Bull transcript, July 2015.

<sup>59</sup> Roy Ascott created this event which included fourteen nodes which developed a narrative with each site contributing sequentially. This art work draws from the Surrealist practice of *Exquisite Corpse*. See <http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/works/la-plissure-du-texte/>

<sup>60</sup> For two weeks sites around the world contributed Slow Scan TV, Fax Art, Internet art and other interventions to an exhibition site, the Corderie, a former rope factory, as part of the Biennale. <http://alien.mur.at/rax/UBIQUA/>

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. Also see Hank Bull (1984) A Brief History of Weincouver, in which he describes the project that started in 1979, "Weincouver is an imaginary city hanging invisible between its two poles: Vienna and Vancouver. Seen from Europe, both cities are at the end of the road, one the Pacific rim of North America, the other just 65 km from the Soviet bloc. They are each on the edge of the art world's magnet field, able to observe from a distance, and equally able to turn the other way, one towards the far east and the other toward the near east. Vienna and Vancouver are wealthy, regional cities with international perspectives. This, coupled with their linguistic and historical differences, makes them ideal correspondents." <http://kunstradio.at/HISTORY/TCOM/WC/wc-index.html>

<sup>62</sup> See the Crista Dahl archives for documentation [http://www.virtualmuseum.ca/sgc-cms/histoires\\_de\\_chez\\_nous-community\\_memoires/pm\\_v2.php?id=search\\_record\\_detail&fl=0&lg=English&ex=00000854&rd=262447&sy=itm&st=&ci=103](http://www.virtualmuseum.ca/sgc-cms/histoires_de_chez_nous-community_memoires/pm_v2.php?id=search_record_detail&fl=0&lg=English&ex=00000854&rd=262447&sy=itm&st=&ci=103)

<sup>63</sup> See Untitled (1978) "'Hands Across the Border': Slow Scan Event" Video Guide, September – October, 1978, Vol 1, # 4, pgs. 11 – 13. Paul Wong provides a good description of Hands Across the Border 1878 – 1989 and its motivation and results. [http://paulwongprojects.com/portfolio/handsacrosstheborder/#.VeJ8T\\_IViko](http://paulwongprojects.com/portfolio/handsacrosstheborder/#.VeJ8T_IViko).

<sup>64</sup> Video Guide, September - October, 1978, Vol. 1, #4

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Linda Johnson, Metro Media and Hourglass CBC. Doctoral Thesis, 1973.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid. pg. 41

<sup>68</sup> Ibid. pg. 45

<sup>69</sup> Paolo Friere, Pedagogy of the Oppressed (New York: Continuum, 1972) 9

<sup>70</sup> Stephen Mamber, Cinema Verite in America: Studies in Uncontrolled Documentary, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1974)

<sup>71</sup> <http://www.coopradi.org/>

<sup>72</sup> Video Guide, Vol 1, #1 Feb/March, 1978

<sup>73</sup> <http://www.crtc.gc.ca/eng/Library/Detail/catalog217>

<sup>74</sup> For a chronology of the history of Canadian broadcast regulation see [http://www.broadcasting-history.ca/index3.html?url=http%3A/www.broadcasting-history.ca/politics\\_regulation\\_lobbying/The\\_History\\_of\\_Canadian\\_Broadcast\\_Regulation.html](http://www.broadcasting-history.ca/index3.html?url=http%3A/www.broadcasting-history.ca/politics_regulation_lobbying/The_History_of_Canadian_Broadcast_Regulation.html)

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid. pg 24

<sup>77</sup> Jennifer Abbott, Ed, Making Video In: the Contested Ground of Alternate Video on the West Coast. (Vancouver: Video In Studios, 2000), 70

<sup>78</sup> Video Guide Vol 4 #3, 11

<sup>79</sup> Ross Gentleman, "Edit: The Citizen's Inquiry", Video Guide Vol , #2. April-May, 1978

<sup>80</sup> "CRTC Reviews and Previews," Video Guide October-November, Vol. 1, # 4, 1978,

<sup>81</sup> Excerpts of the Gina Show are available online at this site. <http://www.theginashow.orgallery.org/>

<sup>82</sup> John Anderson interview, 1990

<sup>83</sup> Sara Diamond, "Vancouver Cable Ten: The Community Access Model", Video Guide Vol. 5, # 5, Winter 1983, 7.

<sup>84</sup> Video Guide Vol 5 #5 Winter 1983

<sup>85</sup> Shawn Preus Interview, 1990.

<sup>86</sup> Jennifer Abbott, Ed., Making Video In: the Contested Ground of Alternate Video on the West Coast. (Vancouver: Video In Studios, 2000)

<sup>87</sup> Shawn Preus interview 1990

<sup>88</sup> Sara Diamond, "Daring Documents: The Practical Aesthetics of Early Vancouver Video," in Stan Douglas, ed., Vancouver Anthology: The Institutional Politics of Art. Vancouver (Vancouver: Or Gallery) 53-88

<sup>89</sup> Marion Barling, "Women – Media Manipulation", Video Guide Vol. 1 No. 2 April-May, 1978, 5.

<sup>90</sup> Carol Williams (1989) A Working Chronology of Feminist Cultural Activities and Events in Vancouver 1970 – 1990 In Vancouver Anthology, ed, Stan Douglas, 173 – 216

<sup>91</sup> Shawn Preus, Video Guide Vol. 3 #1 Summer 1980.

<sup>92</sup> Shawn Preus, Video Guide Vol. 3 #1 Summer 1980.

<sup>93</sup> Margaret Dragu, "Delicate Issue", Video Guide Vol. 2 # 4 and 5, Sept-Oct 79, 1978.

<sup>94</sup> Berwick Street Film Collective (1972-75) The Nightcleaners. London.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eWJJ\\_D3Be8U](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eWJJ_D3Be8U) See <http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/film/berwick-street-film-collective-nightcleaners-part-1>

<sup>95</sup> <http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/film/berwick-street-film-collective-nightcleaners-part-1>

<sup>96</sup> Sara Diamond, "Daring Documents: The Practical Aesthetics of Early Vancouver Video" in Stan Douglas, ed., Vancouver Anthology: The Institutional Politics of Art. Vancouver, (Vancouver: Or Gallery, 1991) 79.

<sup>97</sup> Karen Henry (1982) Women Speak Out: Amelia Productions Video Guide, Vol. 5 #1

<sup>98</sup> Video Guide Issue 35, Volume 7, #5

<sup>99</sup> Lisa Hebert (1986) "Interview: Sara Diamond on Heroes", Video Guide, Issue 35, Volume 7, #5

<sup>100</sup> Susan Lord (2006) "Activating History: Sara Diamond and the Women's Labour History Project, in Eds. Malek Khouri and Darrell Varga Working Workikng on Screen: Representations of the Working Class in Canadian Cinema.

<sup>101</sup> Through my activist work and contacts in the labour movement I met a group of women members of the Communist Party of Canada who had been collecting documentation and some oral history stories. They had identi-

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fied some records, newspaper documentation and had interviewed a number of women. They had run out of steam. Eventually they shared their contacts and material with me. The CPC was very powerful during the war and led the Vancouver and District Labour Council. They had organized the industrial unions in the 1940s, led the United Fishermen and Allied Workers Union and had a good network.

<sup>102</sup> <<The Women's Labour History Project was a not-for-profit that supported six to eight full-time staff who engaged in research, producing activities, distribution, production support. Over the years employees included Zainub Verjee, Meena Totino, Nirmal Jerow, Skye Fowler, Jennifer Abbott, Kellie Marlowe, Jennifer Abbott, Shirley>>

<sup>103</sup> <http://www.videoartincanada.ca/art-ist.php%253Fid=5&section=clip.htm> or <http://www.video-out.ca/catalog/fit-be-tied>

<sup>104</sup> It has turned out to be a useful resource for researchers that followed. I became quite expert in archival detective work, as few finding aides referenced women in the workplace, let alone their organization, and some, like the Vancouver Archives were founded in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century with less than generous premises about race (Chinese and Japanese workers for e.g.) and gender. This interest spilled into excavating film, television and photography archives for material for the Women's Labour History Project media works.

<sup>105</sup> E.P. Thompson (1966) *The Making of the English Working Class*. London: Vintage Books.

<sup>106</sup> The Women's Labour History Project audio tapes can be accessed through these archives. <http://www.sfu.ca/archives2/F-67/F-67.html> holds the first series of oral history interviews. See B.C. Archives <http://search-bcarchives.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/womens-labour-history-project-collection>.

<sup>107</sup> Brecht, Bertolt. "The Modern Theatre is the Epic Theatre." *Theater in Theory 1900-2000: An Anthology*. Ed. David Krasner. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008. 171-173 and Brecht, Bertolt. "Theatre for Pleasure or Theatre for Instruction." *Theater in Theory 1900-2000: An Anthology*. Ed. David Krasner. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008. 173-178.

<sup>108</sup> Piscator, Erwin (1929, 1978) *The Political Theatre. A History 1914-1929*. Translated by Hugh Rorrison, New York: Avon. See also Arthur Sainer (1975) *The Radical Theatre Notebook*, New York: Applause Books for the ways these ideas were applied in the 1970s.

<sup>109</sup> See <http://www.brucebarber.ca/> for a history of Bruce Barber's performances and writing.

<sup>110</sup> See <http://www.gallery.ca/en/see/collections/art-ist.php?iartistid=5764> for an overview of Jeff Wall's oeuvre.

<sup>111</sup> Douglas Kahn (1985) *John Heartfield Art and Mass Media*. New York: Tanam Press, of critical importance is

Walter Benjamin (1969) *Illuminations*. New York: Schocken.

<sup>112</sup> Kahn, *ibid.* pg. 41

<sup>113</sup> Barthes, Roland (1979) translated by Annette Lavers. *Mythologies*. London, Paladin, 1979. Expanded edition (now containing the previously untranslated 'Astrology'), with a new introduction by Neil Badmington, published by Vintage (UK), 2009

<sup>114</sup> Kahn, *ibid.* pg. 117

<sup>115</sup> Khan, *ibid.* pg. 117

<sup>116</sup> <http://www.schoolfinder.com/Programs/14202/Capilano-University/Labour-Studies>

<sup>117</sup> Some were no longer healthy (this is almost a decade after our first encounters) and others had passed. Aural archives remained a source. The transition in memory was interesting in and of itself – there was no language around Alzheimer's at that time, but there could have been another story told as women whose lives had seen considerable hardship has lost their recall.

<sup>118</sup> Coined by Vancouver Sun writer Allan Fotheringham, Lotusland refers to Homer's *Odyssey*, in which the hero, Odysseus, visits a land whose inhabitants are befuddled by a narcotic lotus (the "Land of the Lotus-Eaters"). It sometimes is used to describe all of British Columbia. See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicknames\\_of\\_Vancouver](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicknames_of_Vancouver).

<sup>119</sup> See <http://www.museumofvancouver.ca/collections/object/smilin-buddha-cabaret-sign> for history of the Smilin's Buddha and iconic sign.

<sup>120</sup> Linda Johnson, "Metro Media and Hourglass CBC" (PhD. Dissertation, UBC, 1973.)

<sup>121</sup> Paul Wong Interview, July 2015.

<sup>122</sup> See Simon Frith (1981) *Sound Effects: Youth, Pleasure and the Politics of Rock and Roll*. London: Constable. This book was required reading at the time and provided early cultural studies analyses of music subculture, race, class and identity.

<sup>123</sup> Dana Claxton interview, July, 2015

<sup>124</sup> Cornelia Wyngaarden, transcript, July 2015

<sup>125</sup> Paul Wong Interview July, 2015

<sup>126</sup> Video Inn changed its moniker to Video In (dropping the Inn).

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>128</sup> Crista Dahl interview, July 2015.

<sup>129</sup> Hank Bull transcript. July 2015.

<sup>130</sup> See the Eighth International Video Exchange Directory (1980). *Video In Archives*. For an example of solidarity videos see Jeannine Mitchell (1984) "Manzana por Manzana/Tiempo de Guerre (Artists call against intervention in Latin America)" *Video Guide, Volume 6, #2 Issue 27*

<sup>131</sup> Anuradha (1983) "Development with Video" (1983) *Video Guide Volume 8 #1, Issue 36*

<sup>132</sup> Karen Henry, Issue Ed. (1985) "Cultural Communications", *Video Guide Vol 7, 3 Issue 33, Issue Ed,*

<sup>133</sup> Carol Williams (1991) "A Working Chronology of Feminist Cultural Activities and Events in Vancouver: 1970 – 1990", Stan Douglas, Ed., Vancouver Anthology, Vancouver: Or Gallery. pg 173 – 216 and my archives as co-organizer of their visit.

<sup>134</sup> Himani Banerjee, ed. Karen Henry (1987) "Now You See Us/Now You Don't", Video Guide, Vol. 8 #5. Issue 40.

<sup>135</sup> Paul Wong, Guest Editor, Video Guide, Vol. 8 #5. Issue 40.

<sup>136</sup> See Ed. David A. Bailey, Ian Baucom and Sonia Boyce (2005) *Shades of Black: Assembling Black Arts in 1980s Britain*. London: Duke University Press in Association with INIVA and African and Asian Visual Artists Archive (AAVAA); Black British Arts movement: <http://www.tate.org.uk/learn/online-resources/glossary/b/british-black-arts-movement>; Rasheed Araeen: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rasheed\\_Araeen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rasheed_Araeen); Black Audio Film Collective: <http://www.smokingdogs-films.com/bafc/>; Keith Piper: <http://www.keithpiper.info/statement.htm>; Stuart Hall:

Hall, Stuart (January 1980). "Cultural Studies: two paradigms". *Media, Culture and Society* (Sage) 2 (1): 57–72; Hall, Stuart (1988). *The Hard Road to Renewal: Thatcherism and the Crisis of the Left*. London: Verso., Marlene Smith: <http://newartwm.org/blk-art-group-research-project-marlene-smith-shares-personal-recollections/>

<sup>137</sup> Zainub Verjee interview, July, 2015.

<sup>138</sup> Zainub Verjee interview, July, 2015

<sup>139</sup> Carol Williams (1991) "A Working Chronology of Feminist Cultural Activities and Events in Vancouver" in Stan Douglas, Ed, Vancouver Anthology: The Institutional Politics of Art. Vancouver. Vancouver: Or Gallery, 93-4.

<sup>140</sup> Zainub Verjee interview, July, 2015

<sup>141</sup> Paul Wong in his July, 2015 interview notes that ANNPAC "...violently rejected" proposals for institutional change, "It could not transform itself was unwilling. It was terrible. I had been one of the key organizers and voices of that and we had enlarged it to a bigger circle of our mentors and alliances and invited all of these new members to come and celebrate.[ANNPAC] humiliated us. We took our job very seriously and we spent a year developing that agenda for that AGM. <sup>141</sup>

<sup>142</sup> Paul Wong shares his motivation for founding "On Edge (On the Cutting Edge Production Society)", "It came from a specific need the censorship of my own and others work around sexuality and race.

<sup>143</sup> Paul Wong interview, July, 2015

<sup>144</sup> Karen Knights interview, July, 2015

<sup>145</sup> Douglas Sanders (1979) "Fourth World: A Report". Video Guide. Nov 78 - Jan, 79, pgs. 16-17.

<sup>146</sup> Douglas Sanders (1979) "Fourth World: A Report". Video Guide. Nov 78 - Jan, 79, pgs. 16-17.

<sup>147</sup> Julie Healy (1984)"Electronic Totem by Mike MacDonald" in Video Guide Volume 6, #2 Issue 27

<sup>148</sup> Kristen L. Dowell (2006). *Honouring Stories: Aboriginal Media, Art and Activism in Vancouver*. New York: New York University. p. 1.

<sup>149</sup> Sara Diamond (1991) "Daring Documents: The Practical Aesthetics of Early Vancouver Video" in Stan Douglas, ed., Vancouver Anthology: The Institutional Politics of Art. Vancouver. Vancouver: Or Gallery. Pg. 79.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> Dana Claxton Interview July, 2015

<sup>152</sup> "Howard Green did great work for Native Ed, artists, play wrights, Marie Clements, Warren Arcand, Sam Bob, Columpa Bob, Russell Wallace, Dr. Evan Adams" Dana Claxton Interview, June, 2015

<sup>153</sup> Dana Claxton interview, July, 2015

<sup>154</sup> Dana Claxton interview, July, 2015

<sup>155</sup> Coordinators included Zachery Longboy, Cleo Reece, Ceace Wyss, Tom Howse and Dana Claxton.

<sup>156</sup> See <http://www.audiovisualizers.com/tool-shak/vidsynth/felix/felix.htm> for Razutis's account of these times.

<sup>157</sup> See video documentation in the Crista Dahl archive and library at the VIVO.

<sup>158</sup> See Three Decades of Rage interview by Mike Hoolboom (1995) originally published in Cantrills Filmnotes 1995 <http://mikehoolboom.com/?p=46>

<sup>159</sup> I studied episodically with Al Razutis who did not support my interest in deconstructive narrative. After a confrontational performance that I created in which I brought in a life size doll and defended "her" (as mea0 as her lawyer I left the film program for video and visual art.

<sup>160</sup> [http://xalrazutis.org/alchemy/visual\\_alchemy/felix.html](http://xalrazutis.org/alchemy/visual_alchemy/felix.html)

<sup>161</sup> Cornelia Wyngaarden, transcript, July, 2015

<sup>162</sup> Video Guide, Summer Edition, 1978, Vol. 1 No. 3

<sup>163</sup> <http://www.vtape.org/video?vi=1062>

<sup>164</sup> <http://www.banffcentre.ca/faculty/faculty-member/230/elizabeth-vander-zaag/>

<sup>165</sup> <http://www.fondation-langlois.org/html/e/page.php?NumPage=256>

<sup>166</sup> Sara Diamond (2000) "Turn that Camera Inside Out: Some Thoughts about Synaesthesia", In Jennifer Abbot, Ed, *Making Video In: the Contested Ground of Alternate Video on the West Coast*. Vancouver: Video In Studios

<sup>167</sup> <http://www.sfu.ca/~truax/bios.html>

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/PDP-11>

<sup>170</sup> Lifeforms developed into a full feature program for choreographic planning and motion graphics. <http://charactermotion.com/products/lifeforms/index.html>

<sup>171</sup> Thecla Schiphorst interview, August, 2015.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> Thecla Schiphorst interview, August, 2015

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> Thecla Schiphorst interview, August, 2015

<sup>179</sup> Thecla Schiphorst Interview, August, 2-15

<sup>180</sup> Video Guide Volume 6, #2 Issue 27

<sup>181</sup> [https://en.wikiped-](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Not_a_Love_Story:_A_Film_About_Pornography)

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<sup>182</sup> Sara Diamond (1984) "Clear About Confused", Video Guide Volume 6, #2 Issue 27

<sup>183</sup> [https://www.vanartgallery.bc.ca/media\\_room/pdf/070202b.pdf](https://www.vanartgallery.bc.ca/media_room/pdf/070202b.pdf)

<sup>184</sup> The current version is [http://www.bclaws.ca/Recon/document/ID/freeside/00\\_96314\\_01](http://www.bclaws.ca/Recon/document/ID/freeside/00_96314_01)

<sup>185</sup> I had earlier responded to the debates with a position paper for the arts community, "Of Cabbages and Kinks: Reality and Representation in Pornography". *Parallogramme VIII:5* (June – August, 1983).

<sup>186</sup> Carol Williams (1991) "A Working Chronology of Feminist Cultural Activities and Events in Vancouver: 1970 – 1990" in Stan Douglas ed., *Vancouver Anthology* Carol Williams pg. 204

<sup>187</sup> Ibid., pg 173 – 216

<sup>188</sup> Video Guide Volume 8 #1, Issue 36, p. 3

<sup>189</sup> Carol William, *ibid.* pg. 208

<sup>190</sup> Paul Wong Interview, July, 2015.

<sup>191</sup> Daina Augaitis and Karen Henry (1986) *Luminous Sites Catalogue*, Vancouver: Western Front.p.4

<sup>192</sup> Paul Wong interview, July, 2015

<sup>193</sup> Karen Knight interview, July, 2015

<sup>194</sup> Hank Bull, transcript, July, 2015

<sup>195</sup> Cornelia Wyngaarden interview, July, 2015

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<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

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Figure 3: Paul Wong Personal Archives, 2015. Courtesy of artist.

Figure 4: Vancouver Heritage Foundation, Photograph by Kate Craig, Eric Metcalfe, or Glenn Lewis (founders of Western Front), 1972. Courtesy Gary Lee Nova, member of Intermedia.

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Figure 6: Women in Focus. Video Guide. Summer, 1980. Volume 3, #1. Managing Editor Jeannette Reinhardt, Issue Editor, Shawn Preus. Pg. 3

Figure 7: Paul Wong Personal Archives, 2015. Courtesy of artist.

Figure 8: Hot Chicks on TV (1986) Elizabeth Van der Zaag. 6:30 minutes. English, Distributed by V/Tape <http://www.vtape.org/artist?ai=25>

Figure 9: Sara Diamond personal archives. Photograph by Ellen Frank. Amelia Productions inside the occupation of Vancouver BC Tel headquarters by Vancouver Telecommunication Workers Union. Amelia members Billie Carroll, Sarah Davidson, Sara Diamond, and Gary Hawley in image.

Figure 10: Heroics (1984) Sara Diamond, Video Installation (video, furniture, running time 6 hours) Vancouver, B.C. Feature in Video Guide, Issue 35, Volume 7, #5. , 1985. Pg. 6 Managing Editor Shawn Preus.

Figure 11: Jim Cummins, Punk-A-Roonie, (1981), source: unknown.

Figure 12: Dana Claxton, Cable Four, Vancouver (1982), source: unknown

Figure 13: Dana Claxton, The Red Paper (1996) Installation: 16 mm film (black and white), with sound; 6 hand carved chairs; faux gilded frame. Running time 13:49 minutes. Vancouver, Collection of Vancouver Art Gallery.

Figure 14: Thecla Schiphorst, Lecture on Somaesthetics, HCI, design and interactive art. Visualization Laboratory, College of Architecture, Texas A&M University. March 26, 2012. Source: unknown.