

Germaine Koh: *Around About*

Gallery One One One and Plug In Institute of Contemporary Art

30 November 2001 to 11/12 January 2002

Foreword

The staff of Plug In Institute of Contemporary Art and Gallery One One One have collaborated on this two venue Germaine Koh exhibition. *Around About* has been curated by Christina Ritchie, Director of Vancouver's Contemporary Art Gallery. We thank both Germaine Koh and Christina Ritchie for their generosity and enthusiasm.

Thanks also to the Manitoba Arts Council and The Canada Council for the Arts for their generous support; University of Manitoba School of Art, the Student Visiting Artist Endowment Fund; MAC Bridges Program, The Pepsi Bottling Group, the W.H. & S.E. Loewen Foundation, the University of Manitoba Recycling and Environmental Group, staff, volunteers.

Cliff Eyland, Director, Gallery One One One

Carol Phillips, Managing Director, Plug In Institute of Contemporary Art

Germaine Koh also acknowledges the support of The Canada Council for the Arts, the Ontario Arts Council and the Toronto Arts Council. Both the artist and Christina Ritchie thank Cliff Eyland for initiating and coordinating this exhibition project, and for his energy and extreme good humour throughout its realization.

Germaine Koh: *Around About* An introduction and interview by Cliff Eyland

Germaine Koh is one of Canada's most acclaimed young artists. This is her first Winnipeg exhibition. Last year Plug In and Gallery One One One brought curator Christina Ritchie and Koh to Winnipeg to look at exhibition spaces, to meet local artists and gallery staff, and to give talks about their work. *Around About* is a result of that visit.

Koh works in the tradition of conceptual art using materials that suit the logic of a particular work. She has no signature style and no single methodology. Some of her work is site-specific, that is specially-made for a particular location and time. Some works are almost undetectable, as are her classified ads in local newspapers, others weigh hundreds of pounds, like *Knitwork*, a giant scarf-like blanket of made from the multi-coloured wool of second-hand knitted garments.

Koh often uses urban detritus to make art. Examples: she reproduces found photographs as postcards for her *Sightings* series (at Gallery One One One); she fills used plastic bottles with water to make the work *Floe* (at Plug In); and she salvages wood from city streets to make the work *Lumber* (at Plug In).

The works shown at Gallery One One One are, according to curator Christina Ritchie "...derived from an everyday social interaction - shopping, recreation or reading the daily news." The works selected for Plug In, Ritchie continues "...are more introspective, relating the four 'basic elements' of air, earth, fire and water to autonomous phenomena of the physical world. *Floe*, for example, is constructed from that mainstay of urban life, the ubiquitous plastic water bottles, assembled to suggest a glacial mass. In the work ... [shown earlier in 2001 at the Contemporary Art Gallery in Vancouver] a large quantity of tiny ball bearings are made to resemble rain, suggesting the qualities of immediacy and chance of actual weather."

Koh, who is in her mid-thirties, is often referred to as a "conceptual" or a "neo-conceptual" artist, designations that, without qualification, are too simple, too narrow, and terms from

which the artist explicitly distances herself (see interview below). "Neo-conceptualism" fails to convey how comfortable Koh's Gen-X generation of artists is using both traditional and new media -- the term can't encapsulate their 'anything goes' methodology. The prefix "neo" in "neo-conceptualism" also annoys because it diverts attention from a more general view that thirty-or-so years worth myriad manifestations of conceptual art elicits: that conceptual art is one cultural thread among many unraveled out of an Enlightenment waistcoat, not just an art movement that began in the 1950s and 1960s with Marcel Duchamp as its Dada grandfather. Koh and her colleagues are as much children of Voltaire and Diderot as they are of their conceptual art predecessors Joseph Kosuth, Lawrence Weiner and Canadians Joyce Weiland, Michael Snow, General Idea and associates of the Nova Scotia College of Art & Design.

For hundreds of years before the Enlightenment, European art was largely concerned with making Christian mythology concrete in paintings and sculptures. Since then art that concerned itself with banishing angels from pictures reached a logical extreme in conceptual and process art of the 1960s. In some cases the idea of an art "idea" itself became fetishized, but in other respects conceptual art has an inevitability about it that is impossible to ignore, linked as it is to the empirical and scientific basis of post-Enlightenment culture.

To complicate matters, Sol LeWitt's first sentence on conceptual art asserts: "Conceptual artists are mystics rather than rationalists." (LeWitt, p.106) Koh hints at an agreement when she says in the interview below: "I do think that my best work maintains some kind of balance between the mundane and the wondrous."

The postcard project *Sightings* (1992-98, which Koh describes as "Offset postcards printed from found snapshots.") is a commercially printed set of cards derived from discarded photographs she has found in public places. "The caption on the back of each card records with archival precision the date, site and circumstances of the find, describes any identifying marks, and gives the publication date and my address..."

Sightings includes reproductions of photos that have been torn in two; many have abrasions

and other marks of neglect and abuse that must have accumulated as the snapshot was lying on the pavement somewhere; some are mildly or explicitly erotic (at least one is clearly amateur porn); and one shows a date electronically written into its corner. Koh saves these snippets of anonymous daily life from obscurity. Of course, these works are also her fictions. She reproduces only a select few of the photographs she finds. The *Sightings* series was ended after the works were shown in Australia and a gallery visitor recognized a face in one of the works -- an extraordinary coincidence that to Koh must have seemed like the closing of a circle, an appropriate end to the project.

Germaine Koh: "*Lumber* is a massive collection of used and discarded pieces of 2"x4" wood gathered and reworked over three years, in various cities. Through this process of urban harvesting the standard forms accumulate into a flexible volume that conforms to particular spaces. Each piece is glazed with layers of muted oil and marine varnish, which accumulate to form a durable finish subtly enhancing surface irregularities and marks of use...."

Again Koh puts urban detritus to work: *Lumber* recycles wood to make art. Coincidentally, Nicholson Baker's funny essay "Lumber" traces the use of the word as a synonym for garbage: "For in English prose and poetry, *lumber* doesn't mean what most Americans think it means ('felled timber'); rather it means, roughly *old household goods, slow-selling wares, stuff, or junk* -- junk of the sort you might find at a junkshop..." (Baker, p.234) and "The mind has been called a *lumber-room*, and its contents or its printed products described as *lumber*, since about 1610." (Baker, p.208)

Koh goes to great lengths to document, present and lovingly preserve such waste. One thinks of the use of newspapers in Cubist collage, Robert Rauschenberg's combine paintings, and, more recently Jessica Stockholder's environments in relation to this work, but too soon: Koh does not fuss out of her materials elaborately composed paintings, sculptures and installations; instead the materials are stripped naked -- as unadorned as a Shaker chair. *Lumber's* sticks -- so carefully preserved by the artist -- align themselves more closely to Mierle Laderman Ukeles' 1960s theories of "maintenance" as art than to the compositional

incorporation of garbage in post-Cubist objects.

In Winnipeg, the word "backwater" is synonymous with "floodway." (As in the sentence: "I do not think of Winnipeg as a cultural backwater, but a cultural floodway.") To me, and perhaps to other Winnipeggers who experienced the 1997 flood, Koh's *Floe* (at Plug In) is a witty confluence of associations with water, recycling, and catastrophe. The 1997 flood was a beautifully slow disaster, at least from my own Assiniboine Avenue vantage: I watched the water slowly rise up the trees. The psychological tension in our apartment building was like water tension, stress broken either by being either swamped or saved. At other points along the Red and Assiniboine rivers, however, the '97 flood had a dam-busting intensity. Koh's bottle stack can conjure both the slow and fast flood in a viewer by the most economical means.

Germaine Koh's Gen-X generation of artists is not intimidated by technology. Suppose a notion is entertained to rig an office computer to a smoke machine so that keyboard activity sends smoke signals in Morse Code - no problem. How about a machine (entitled ...) that drops tiny beads at random from the ceiling? That can be done. (Strangely, both an ellipsis underlined as a title and Morse Code comprise a semiotically reduced set of dots and dashes.)

I attended Koh's opening a few months back (see interview below) at the Contemporary Art Gallery in Vancouver and got rained on by the ball bearing machine. Outside, real rain kept time with the tiny bouncing steel balls. The conjunction of smoke, ball bearings and rain was a happy one. At first patrons were instructed to enter the ball bearing room a few at a time, then children started to push their way in to play, then inebriated adults began to slide around on the ball bearing strewn floor, and then the show turned into a wiggle-fest (for unrelated reasons, the police shut everything down just after Koh escaped into the black Vancouver night with her friends).

Cliff Eyland eylandc@hotmail.com

Works Cited

Sol LeWit, "Sentences on Conceptual Art" reprinted in Conceptual Art : a critical anthology edited by Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson [Cambridge, MIT Press, 2000] p.106)

Nicholson Baker, "Lumber" in The Size of Thoughts [Toronto:Vintage 1996] pp 207-355)

Christina Ritchie, Waste Management [Toronto, Art Gallery of Ontario 1999]

GERMAINE KOH WORKS FOR PLUG IN

Prayers (1999)

Intervention with computer interface and smoke machine transmitting office activity

Throughout the day, a computer interface captures all the keystrokes typed on another computer within the same building. In real time, this raw data is translated to Morse code and broadcast into the surrounding atmosphere in the form of Morse-encoded smoke signals issuing from a vent or other opening in the building as longer and shorter puffs of smoke. More and less active at various times of the day and its output more and less visible under varying conditions, the apparatus is a kind of exhaust system for the machine of daily industry. At the same time, it relates today's electronic communications to previous technological and communications revolutions: telegraph, binary languages, steam power, smoke signals. Everyday hopes and fleeting desires, channelled through the implements of daily work, are briefly given form as they are dispersed into the world at large, "on the wing of a prayer."

... (2000)

Ball-bearings, electrical mechanisms, vinyl track

The installation . . . features a gentle and continuous shower of small ball-bearings across an apparently-empty space. These quietly bounce around, puddling here and there, and are eventually picked up to begin the cycle anew. This constant yet barely visible movement establishes a zone of uncertainty, elusiveness, and slight hazard, and also of play. The project arose from an invitation to develop new work based on artifacts from the collection of the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre in Toronto. The conceptual origin of . . . was a small quantity of pachinko balls in this collection, which were remarkable precisely because they were so innocuous. As unassuming artifacts of a game of chance, they not only were tokens of everyday compulsions, but also had the potential to represent a slipping-away of things. Translating the pachinko balls into the mechanical efficiency of ball-bearings and further re-imagining them as a sort of elemental force, the installation embodies a state of chance and passage by creating a space of slippage, of fluidity, and of forgetting rather than remembering.

Lumber (1991-94)

Oil, enamel and varnish on approximately 700 pieces of recuperated 2x4 lumber

Lumber is a massive collection of discarded pieces and scraps of 2x4 lumber gathered and reworked over three years, in various cities. Through this process of urban harvesting these objects accumulate into a flexible volume that expands and contracts to conform to the spaces in which it is installed/stored. Each piece is glazed with many layers of muted oil and marine varnish, which accumulate to form a durable finish subtly enhancing its surface irregularities and marks of use. Within the mass, each piece is subtly different than the others. The materiality of these mundane standard forms is surprisingly evocative, variously suggesting an urban forest, a skyline, or a crowd of individuals. They are ready-mades, but also artifacts bearing the marks of their use; commonplace material rendered contemplative; and manufactured forms that become (again) organic or even anthropomorphic.

Floe (2001)

Installation of refilled plastic drink bottles

A new installation created for Plug In, in which a glacial mass of refilled plastic drink bottles is contained by the architectural details of the space.

GERMAINE KOH WORKS FOR GALLERY 1.1.1

Sightings (1992-98)

Offset postcards printed from found snapshots

Sightings is a series of postcards commercially printed from snapshots found in public places. The caption on the back of each card records with archival precision the date, site and circumstances of the find, describes any identifying marks, and gives the publication date and my address. The cards relate individual experience to public forms. Travelling the anonymous realm between lost and found, they enigmatically mark the passage of specific people through particular times and spaces. Melding the functions of snapshots and postcards as conventional forms for remembrance, location and commemoration of individual experience, the project recognizes that the imagery and function of both snapshots and postcards are nevertheless public forms located squarely in popular space. Described by their location in communal rather than familial territory, and recognizable primarily as types (special occasions, pets, etc.), the images are treated as archival specimens garnered from this collective domain.

Journal (ongoing since 1995) - n.b. title changes with each venue

Series of classified ads in daily newspaper

From time to time I have used the personal-notices section of the classified ads of various daily newspapers as the site for a kind of journal (for are journals not written for eventual consumption by others -- or at least oneself as another separated by time?). These messages invert the urgency of this familiar space for recording the circulation of useful things and abject hopes. The tone of the texts is familiar, providing mundane observations about my daily routines (example: "8 April, Toronto. Ran into A and S, who solved my problem. Had dinner, beer. I like them."). Instead of seeking the commercial or social translations usually advertised in this space, I use the real time and repetition embedded in the newspaper to relate little more than the passing of time, gently magnifying its banality and arguing for the monumentality of daily preoccupations. Executed anonymously, this work's reception is as unknowable as its potential audience is wide, though part of its poignancy lies in the assumption that many of the activities I describe might be familiar to many of the unknown people who happen to read them. Although the events are particular to me, they thus might seem to represent certain shared collective experiences.

Signs (2001)

Colour photographs mounted on PVC panels

Signs is a series of multi-panel works based on photos of words from public signage, which are assembled into terse concrete poems reminiscent of the phrases used to negotiate everyday interpersonal relations. They rely equally on a play of words and formal details.

Germaine Koh interviewed by Cliff Eyland

When asked a question in person, Koh takes a moment, and then answers with deliberation and seriousness. She is straightforward -- she does not evade or obfuscate. Conversation with Koh evinces none of the intellectual panic that has been so esteemed within recent cultures of postmodernism. The following interview with Germaine Koh was conducted by e-mail over several months in 2001:

CE: Does your artistic attitude/aesthetic have anything to do with Zen? I am thinking in particular of your storefront pieces (a performance in which you stand mannequin-still as you look out a window) which of course also relate to contemporary consumer culture. Your sometime 'Fluxus' attitude, the neo-conceptualism, etc. - is plain, but what about the attitude you have to anonymity (for example that pole you anonymously placed in a public path) and to paradoxical play (for example, the smoke machine)?

GK: This response will ramble a bit...

I suppose there are obvious points of commonality between my practice and Zen attitudes, though this is coincidental. That is, I haven't sought out this relationship, just as I haven't worked in relation to other traditions (such as conceptualism or minimalism or Fluxus) with which my work has sometimes been identified. I think my work has been a matter of my trying to elaborate my own particular world view rather than modeling it after any one else's. I have always thought it more productive to try to work (as much as possible) with a certain deliberate ignorance of artistic and philosophical traditions, in order to figure things out for myself. There's a kind of do-it-yourself impulse in this, which is also reflected in the fact that so many of my works are based in observation of ground-level phenomena rather than being strictly conceptual or theoretical. In this way it may be more telling to note how my practice diverges from any particular tradition -- for example, how my work, though quite conceptual, is unlike "classic" Conceptualism in that it is always somehow embodied in "real-life" physical objects.

Regarding anonymity, yes, it's a principle and a strategy that is dear to me. I think this relates

to my intuition that it is the most commonplace or generic things surrounding us which have the greatest potential to tell us about ourselves. Thus when I'm working within existing structures or with known types of objects, I think it's more interesting to make propositions that are anonymous, that seem to issue directly from collective practices, but that might also eventually be the occasion for some reflection on the part of their incidental audiences. The notion of authorship is something I have tried to relinquish, or at least complicate. Even in a piece like *Knitwork*, which in one sense is an overtly heroic individual labour, I work as a kind of everywoman, as just one of the masses of women who do this kind of work their entire lives.

Play, too, is fundamental. It appears overtly in certain works which set themselves up as games or which involve gamesmanship or social exchange (such as *Teams, for you*, or the various currency projects), but it also underlies all the projects which are experimental in nature, which are about making propositions in the world and seeing how they unfold. Since my very earliest work (abstract paintings), one of my core interests is in setting up situations in which members of an "audience" find themselves reckoning with situations, making meaning of the things that surround them. So there are kinds of semiotic and formalized social play in my work, but there is also playfulness and often, I think, a good measure of humour. There's a bit of a distinction to be made between play and playfulness/humour, wherein the former is a rather public stance and the latter is where my otherwise-well-concealed personal character begins to emerge.

CE: Much of the most interesting public art these days appears to be anonymous, even to the art public sometimes. That anonymity is in no way a denial of authorship, of course: like bridges and furniture, an audience of knowledgeable people can follow an artist's trail and maybe make accurate attributions or guesses about authorship, or they can simply find out who made the work through the art press and through exhibitions that refer to anonymously placed public works. I wonder, however, if many of our best artists are admitting to a long history of failure in the last century's public art when they work anonymously.

GK: You're probably right that a lot of artists working in the public domain today want

overtly to distance themselves from the practices of "plunk art." I think that the tendency to anonymity is probably an effect that has trickled down through recent traditions of community-based work such as the "new genre public art" outlined in Suzanne Lacy's 1995 anthology *Mapping the Terrain*. The way I see it, the focus on cooperation and social agency in that "new genre" public work is probably what makes non-hierarchical collective activity, (apparent) lack of authorship and anonymity seem the politically correct ways to work now. Add to that a measure of Gen-X slacker pathos and a rejection of branding, and maybe you get a generation of artists pathologically incapable of taking responsibility for their own actions... But I should probably only speak for my own work, and I'd have to say that yes, certainly there are conceptual and formal threads that connoisseurs can follow, so that it is not at all a matter of withdrawing from the discourse. For me, the tendency to make unassuming and self-effacing work is a means of trying to spread attention around it as much as focus it. I want the things I do to be caught up in and experiment with existing social processes, so I don't want them to call so much attention to themselves (or to me) that they prevent this. I try to maintain a balance, setting up situations which at first blend into the world but which might eventually or occasionally cause real moments of reckoning with that world. So while the individual projects might appear anonymous, there is a discursive position embedded in the way they are placed in the world

CE: Is it true that you are, or that you make yourself, or that you feel - homeless?

GK: Yes, both through circumstance and deliberate intent. Over the past years I have rid myself of most possessions, and I haven't had an apartment for a few years. The net result that I feel ready to pick up and go almost anywhere with very little notice. When I'm in Toronto I stay in my studio, which is relatively cheap but small and has no running water. The source of this is a desire to remain adaptable and responsive to conditions outside of myself, and not some innate nomadism (i.e. not a desire to travel as an end in itself). I suppose that this necessarily opens onto a question about identity, and in my case the feeling of not exactly having one, of feeling rather unfixd, and therefore of preferring a kind of defensive, almost survivalist, mode to anything more stable and closed. It's important to me to be able to negotiate most physical and social circumstances. Im also suspicious of the

dictates of identity politics, which insists so strongly on difference that it tends to overlook commonalities between various groups, I think. This sense of unfixity also finds expression in my work, most obviously in the fact that most projects insist on being contingent and changeable. It might also produce in the audience a sense of melancholy for the way that things appear and disappear. I realize that a sense of wanting to participate in the world but not being tied to things was, perhaps ironically, part of what determined the form of some of my earliest work using found objects, such as *Lumber* and *Knitwork*. At an early point I thought the 2x4s I was picking up could be portable pieces, which they do remain, individually. As a group they become rather more unwieldy. Likewise, *Knitwork* was a way of taking note of and absorbing these transient objects. That they collectively grew into a massive residue was a conceptually necessary result of this process of transubstantiation. These remarks could lead to a discussion about the structure of a lot of my work (in terms of a relationship of parts to a whole, which in many cases might resemble a relation between individuals to a collective).

CE: Your work ranges from the jokey to the elegiac, and can be variously connected with that of contemporary jokesters like Maurizio Cattelan, Francis Alÿs, Rirkrit Tiravanija and Ron Terada; artists who can be funny and poignant like Ken Lum; artists with no discernible sense of humour like Yoko Ono; artists whose work has become increasingly somber, like the Canadians Micah Lexier, Daniel Olsen and Stephen Andrews; and finally, to the late and profoundly elegiac Cuban/American artist Felix González-Torres. Is the deadpan humour in your work heading toward an art of grief and loss?

GK: I think my work is becoming increasingly elegiac, but I hope not nostalgic. I guess I want it to reveal the drama and melancholy built into our everyday undertakings: the hopefulness of trying to make connections; the mundane needs and desires that drive our actions; the way we feel about things coming, going and changing; the massive force of commonplace activity. With quite a few recent works banal phenomena stand as tokens for larger, intangible movements in ways which might feel rather poignant (for example, the Mexico-City installation of water bottles or the ball-bearing installation or the smoke machine *Prayers*). I think I have been seeking a kind of poetry of everyday movements

since my earliest work (for example, *Knitwork* is a monument to the unfolding of things, time, and labour), trying to balance between humour/absurdity and lyricism without being too much of either. It's more often an ode to the present than an elegy for the past.

A little aside on the matter of humour: I believe that funny things and good conceptual art often operate in similar ways. They both rely on a convergence, in which a single utterance brings together ideas in a pithy way. It's all about elegance and economy. Maybe that's why conceptualism is always in danger of falling into tragicomedy.

CE: I don't get the sense that your work has been directly related to your "ethnicity" except tangentially in a few works, and I think that the reason for that may be generational, that is, that your thoroughly internationalist generation is beyond any narrow categorization within an "ethnicity." True? False? Naive of me to ask?

GK: There probably is something to your globalism hypothesis. Certainly the heyday of identity politics has passed, so that it might seem less crucial to insist on cultural identity than it once was. It's like the second and subsequent waves of feminism having the luxury to take for granted certain advances for which previous generations struggled. I think that one result of the didacticism of identity politics has been a fundamental cultural shift towards understanding identity as fluid and flexible or hybrid, and my deliberate attempt to live and work provisionally are in line with this tendency. I do take issue with the way in which identity politics emphasized difference to such an extent that it created, I think, false divisions. I am both a feminist and a person who experiences the conditions of being a Chinese-Canadian immigrant, but neither appears very stridently in my work. This is because I choose to emphasize commonality -- the often-mundane things that most people in a society share in common -- over difference. This is one of the ways in which my work does embody a low-key activism.

CE: I attended the your opening at Vancouver's new Contemporary Art Gallery a few months ago and had the pleasure of 1) being pelted by your ball bearing rain machine inside the gallery 2) being pelted by real rain outside, and 3) having fog pushed into my face at the

perimeter thanks to your computerized smoke machine. The telling of this experience is like the recollection of a poetic dream: nothing about this dream contradicts the laws of gravity or ordinary physics like many dreams, and yet the memory of reads like dream work, the condensation (no pun intended) of a day's events into a dream. Do you ever think about how your work and life can seem to be a kind of dreaming because recollections can seem so poetically unreal?

GK: I'm glad you mentioned this. I do consciously think of my work as an attempt to seek out the poetry implicit in everyday experience. I don't think of it as an attempt to make things unreal, but to find the wonder in the things that already exist around us. There might seem to be something unreal or surreal in some of the experiences, because it's a matter of making things strange (or new) again. I do think that my best work maintains some kind of balance between the mundane and the wondrous.

CE: About your personal history, at least whatever you would like to reveal. How does, for example, Malaysia fit in?

GK: I don't feel much of a connection to Malaysia, having come to Canada at age two and having grown up in North America with that particular concern that children have for just wanting to fit in. But even when I did get to the point of realizing the importance of roots, Malaysia still didn't seem that pertinent to me. What shaped me more than the culture of my birthplace was growing up as a minority in a small town, feeling conspicuous and being made to feel out of place every day. I may have ended up being less self-conscious had I grown up in a city, where there are more possible ways of being and living. I think that my survivalism, my commitment to contingency, and most certainly my desire to disappear or be anonymous are related to having grown up in these conditions. What other kinds of personal things do you want to know? I don't think that life and art are one and the same thing. Art is good for giving us pause to reflect upon life, so I do try to actually have a life apart from my work, without being hyper-conscious of what I'm doing at every moment (think of it as gathering "source material" or gaining "primary experience"). I have a wonderful life, in fact. I'm in love!

Biographical

GERMAINE KOH is a visual artist and independent curator of no fixed address. In 2001 she has had two solo exhibitions at the Contemporary Art Gallery (Vancouver) and Plug In/Gallery One One One (Winnipeg). Recent solo exhibitions include *Arte in Situ* (Mexico City, 2000), *Latitude 53* (Edmonton, 2000), *Ex Teresa Arte Actual* (Mexico City, 1999), and *Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions* (1999). International group exhibitions include the *11th Biennale of Sydney* (1998), *La Biennale de Montréal 2000*, *Waste Management* at the Art Gallery of Ontario (1999), and *In All the Wrong Places* at the Ottawa Art Gallery (1999). Koh is represented by Catriona Jeffries Gallery, Vancouver. Germaine Koh may be reached by e-mail at germ@artengine.ca Please also see the web site at www.geocities.com/germaine_koh

CHRISTINA RITCHIE curated *Around About*. She is the Director/Curator of the Contemporary Art Gallery in Vancouver in July of this year. Before that she worked as Assistant Curator of Contemporary Art at the Art Gallery of Ontario, where she presented numerous exhibitions, notably *Waste Management* in 1999 (which included work by Germaine Koh) and solo projects with such artists as Euan Macdonald, Ron Terada, Instant Coffee and others. She is a member of the editorial collective of *Public Access* and acts as adjunct faculty at York University in Toronto. Christina Ritchie may be reached by e-mail at christina@contemporaryartgallery.ca

CLIFF EYLAND is the Director of Gallery One One One. Eyland studied at Holland College, Mount Allison University, and the Nova Scotia College of Art & Design. He has written criticism for Canadian art magazines since 1983. Since moving to Winnipeg in 1994 he has written regularly for *Border Crossings* magazine. His curatorial work includes 9 years at the Technical University of Nova Scotia School of Architecture (now Daltech).

VALERYCAMARTA has been coordinating programming at Plug In ICA since April 1999. Before that she coordinated exhibitions at the Saint Norbert Arts Centre and the

Winnipeg Art Gallery.

ROBERT EPP is an independent arts consultant and Gallery Co-ordinator at Gallery One One One. At the Gallery, Epp oversees the administration of the Gallery, co-ordinates the exhibition program, and manages its permanent collection and the FitzGerald Study Collection. As an arts consultant, Epp provides curatorial and tour management services to artists and arts organizations in Manitoba. Current independent projects include a national touring exhibition of contemporary photographs by Canadian artist William Eakin, entitled, "Have A Nice Day". This past summer (2001) Epp was project manager for the Wanda Koop installation, "In Your Eyes," presented in conjunction with the 2001 Venice Biennale.

curriculum vitae

Updated October 2001

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- [education/biographical](#)

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SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2002

* (upcoming) [Catriona Jeffries Gallery](#) (Vancouver)

2001

* (upcoming) [Plug In Inc.](#) / Gallery 1.1.1 (Winnipeg), curated by Christina Ritchie. Catalogue by Cliff Eyland forthcoming

* **Germaine Koh**, [Contemporary Art Gallery](#) (Vancouver). Catalogue by Laura U. Marks. Selected reviews: Robin Laurence, *The Globe and Mail* (Toronto), 19 May 2001; Robin Laurence, *The Georgia Straight* (Vancouver), 24-31 May 2001 ([view](#) 330k PDF); Joan Richardson, *Vie des Arts*, Summer 2001; Amy Cheng, *Art & Collection* (Taiwan), July 2001

* **Watch**, Solo Exhibition (Toronto). Reviews: Leah McLaren, *The Globe and Mail* (Toronto), 24 February 2001; Kim Fullerton, *Xtra!* (Toronto), 22 February 2001; Andrew J. Paterson, *Lola* (Toronto), no. 9, Summer 2001

2000

* **Journal**, Latitude 53 (Edmonton). Brochure by Alan Reed. Review: Chris Zdeb, *Edmonton Journal*, 23 October 2000

* **by the way**, [Arte in Situ / La Torre de los Vientos](#) (Mexico City). Review: Cuauhtémoc Medina, *Reforma* (México City), 21 June 2000

1999

* **En busca del nivel del lago**, [Ex Teresa Arte Actual](#) (Mexico City). Reviews: Tania Gómez, *Reforma* (Mexico City), 14 April 1999; [Adriana García](#), *El Universal* (Mexico City), 20 April 1999

* **Germaine Koh: Living room**, Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions

* **For you**, [internet project](#), [Artengine](#). Reviews: Anita Euteneier, *Capital City* (Ottawa), 4-10 March 1999; Jeff Pappone, *Ottawa Citizen*, 24 May 1999

1998

* **Des gages/ Tokens**, [Centre des arts actuels SKOL](#) (Montreal).

Publication: Joceline Chabot, text in *SKOL 1998-1999* catalogue. Reviews: Marcus Miller, *Hour* (Montreal), 10-16 December 1998; Nicolas Mavrikakis, *Voir* (Montreal), 10-16 December 1998

* **Notices**, [YYZ Artists' Outlet](#), Toronto. Reviews: Kyo Maclear, *Toronto Life*, May 1998; Gillian MacKay, *The Globe and Mail* (Toronto), 25 April 1998; Anitra Hamilton, *Lola* (Toronto), no. 3, 1998; Sue-Ann Levy, *Toronto Sun*, 8 May 1998

1997

* **Knitwork**, [Southern Alberta Art Gallery](#), Lethbridge. Review: Joy Hickson, *Lethbridge Herald*, 18 July 1997

* **Germaine Koh: Personal**, [Agnes Etherington Art Centre](#) (Kingston, Canada), curated by Jan Allen. Catalogue by Jan Allen and Wayne Baerwaldt. Reviews: Petra Halkes, *C Magazine*, no. 56, 1997; Lee Parpart, *Kingston Whig-Standard*, 12 July 1997

1996

* **Knitwork**, eyelevel gallery (Halifax). Review: Elissa Barnard, *Halifax Chronicle-Herald/Mail-Star*, 9 February 1996

1995

1995

- * **Knitwork**, Yukon Arts Centre (Whitehorse)

1993

- * **Knitwork/Tricot-âge**, B-312 (Montreal). Exhibition folder by Michele White. Review: Jennifer Couëlle, *ETC MONTRÉAL*, no.25, February-May 1994

1991

- * **The International Code of Signals Paintings**, [Gallery 101](#) (Ottawa). Broadsheet by Daniel Sharp. Review: Nancy Baele, *Ottawa Citizen*, 5 September 1991

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2001

- * (upcoming) **FREQUENCitY**, Kunstradio (Vienna), curated by Steve Bates
- * **Visualeyez** performance festival, [Latitude 53](#) (Edmonton)
- * **Recent Acquisitions, Part 2**, [Kelowna Art Gallery](#) (Kelowna, British Columbia)
- * **Art - Supernatural Fairytales (Pinkk Island)**, [Catriona Jeffries Gallery](#) (Vancouver)
- * **Window Shopping**, Images Festival of Independent Film and Video (Toronto), curated by R.M. Vaughan
- * **Pacemaker** internet exhibition, Ed Video (Guelph, Ontario), curated by Mary Cross ([link to exhibition](#))

2000

- * **Le mois de la performance**, [La Centrale](#) (Montreal)

- * **Tracking**, [Art Gallery of Windsor](#)
- * **Recollection Project**, Gendai Gallery (Toronto). Catalogue forthcoming
2001
- * **Tout le temps / Every Time: La Biennale de Montréal 2000**, curated by Peggy Gale ([link](#)). [Catalogue essay](#) by Laura U. Marks
- * **Placecards**, [Mercer Union](#) (Toronto). Brochure by Stacey Lancaster
- * **Logo City**, curated by Barbara Fischer, [Blackwood Gallery](#), University of Toronto Erindale Campus. Selected reviews: R.M. Vaughan, *Azure*, September-October 2000; Katharine Sealey, *The Mississauga News*, 24 May 2000
- * **Making Light: Wit and Humor in Photography**, Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, Vassar College (Poughkeepsie, NY), April-June 2000. Catalogue
- * **Casual Viewings**, curated by Ihor Holubizky, Kelowna Art Gallery
- * **Self-conscious**, [Catriona Jeffries Gallery](#) (Vancouver). Brochure by Pamela Meredith
- * **1000 gracias**, curated by Luis Jacob and François Dion, Optica (Montreal). Catalogue: *Fin de siècle* (Montreal: Optica, 2000)
- * **The Global 500**, curated by Jean Bernard Koeman, W139 (Amsterdam), part of 17th [World Wide Video Festival](#). Catalogue

1999

- * **Public Art at Arts Court**, City of Ottawa Art in Public Places Program. Catalogue. Review: Donna Wawzonek, *Lola 5*, Winter 1999-2000
- * **In All the Wrong Places / Dans des lieux incongrus**, curated by Sylvie Fortin, [Ottawa Art Gallery](#). Catalogue forthcoming
- * **Re: Rauschenberg**, curated by Stuart Horodner, Marcel Sitcoske Gallery (San Francisco)
- * **Waste Management**, curated by Christina Ritchie, [Art Gallery of Ontario](#) (Toronto). Catalogue by Christina Ritchie. Selected reviews: Dana Samuel, *Fuse*, vol. 22, no. 4, 2000; Ingrid Chu, *National Post* (Toronto), 8 April 1999; Gary Michael Dault, *The Globe and Mail*, 17 April 1999; Christopher Hume, *Toronto Star*, 15 April; Si Si Peñaloza, *Now* (Toronto), 8-14 April 1999; R.M. Vaughn, *eye* (Toronto), 22 April 1999; Laura Bil, *The Varsity* (Toronto), 13 April 1999; Arlene Stacey, *Canadian Living*, August 1999
- * **Trans**, curated by Cathy Thomas, Art Lab, University of Western Ontario (London). Brochure. Reviews: *Lola 4*, summer 1999

1998

- * ***Imitating Christmas***, curated by Jens Hoffmann, Wiensowski & Harbord (Berlin). Brochure
- * ***Every Day: 11th Biennale of Sydney***, curated by Jonathan Watkins (Australia) ([link](#)). Books: Jonathan Watkins and Jo Spark, eds., *Every Day* catalogue; Susan Best and Charles Green, eds., *In the every day* (Sydney: Artspace Visual Arts Centre). Selected reviews: Ihor Holubizky, *Canadian Art* (Toronto), Winter 1998; Trevor Smith et al., *LIKE, Art Magazine* (Melbourne), no. 7; Lisa Liebmann and Brooks Adams, *Art in America*, June 1999
- * ***Urban textures urbaines***, curated by Tim Dallett, [Gallery 101](#) (Ottawa). Brochure by Tim Dallett. Review: Cheri Marple, *Ottawa XPress*, 27 August 1998

1996

- * ***London Life Young Contemporaries '96***, curated by James Patten, London Regional Art and Historical Museums, touring 1997-98. Catalogue. Selected review: Robin Metcalfe, *Canadian Art*, Spring 1997
- * ***Representechnics***, curated by Tim Dallett, [Gallery 101](#) (Ottawa). Catalogue: *Image/Duration: installations of the moving image* (Gallery 101, 1999)
- * ***The Rite of Spring***, Franklin Furnace (New York)

1995

- * ***Fairytale in the Supermarket***, curated by Judith Findlay and Kirsty Ogg as part of "Fotofeis 95 International Festival of Photography in Scotland", Scotland Street Museum (Glasgow)
- * ***Home Remedies and Magnificent Obsessions***, curated by Susan Purves, [Center on Contemporary Art](#) (Seattle). Selected reviews: Robin Updike, *The Seattle Times*, 27 July 1995; Bruce Barcott, *Seattle Weekly*, 19 July 1995; Regina Hackett, *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, 14 July 1995
- * ***PROOF (2)***, Gallery 44 (Toronto). Brochure
- * ***Bodies of Evidence***, [The New Gallery](#) (Calgary), curated by Dionne McAfee. Brochure
- * ***Velvet Fever and Other Kitsch Inclinations***, Artcite (Windsor)
- * ***Group exhibition*** curated by Janis Bowley, OR Gallery (Vancouver). Brochure by Janis Bowley. Review: Robin Laurence, *The Vancouver Sun*, 13

May 1995

* ***I Love What I'm Doing***, organized by Mary Murphy, Karen Reimer and Jane Saks, Randolph Street Gallery (Chicago). Exhibition folder

1994

* ***Fibres nerveuses***, curated by Anne Marie Léger, Maison de la culture Frontenac (Montreal). Catalogue by Anne Marie Léger, *Fibres nerveuses* (Ville de Montréal). Review: Raymond Serratchez, *La Presse* (Montreal), 7 January 1995

* ***Home***, travelling exhibition curated by Caroline Langill: Eastern Edge (St. John's) and SAW Gallery (Ottawa)

* ***Germaine Koh / Nicole Lebel***, La Centrale/Galerie Powerhouse (Montreal). Brochure by Nicole Thérien. Reviewed by Henry Lehmann, *Montreal Mirror*, 2 June 1994

* ***Monuments in the present tense***, [Ottawa Art Gallery](#), curated by Jean-François Renaud. Brochure by Jean-François Renaud. Review: Nancy Baele, *Ottawa Citizen*, 17 April 1994

1991

* ***March 1991 mars***, curated by Philip Fry, Arts Court (Ottawa). Catalogue by Philip Fry. Review: Elizabeth Ritchie, *Parachute* (Montreal) no.63, July-September 1991

1990

* ***Another Picture I***, curated by Daniel Sharp, Gallery 101. Essay by Daniel Sharp. Review: Nancy Baele, gallery review, *Ottawa Citizen*, 30 August 1990

ARTICLES UNRELATED TO EXHIBITIONS

2001

- * Joel Smith, "Roll Over: The Snapshot's Museum Afterlife," *Afterimage*, September-October 2001, p. 8-11
- * Mathew Kabatoff, "Signals--An Interview with Germaine Koh," *Rhizome.org*, 31 January ([link](#))
- * Patrice Loubier, "Énigmes, offrandes, virus: formes furtives dans quelques pratiques actuelles," *Parachute* (Montreal), no. 101, January-March 2001, pp. 99-105

2000

Catherine Osborne, "Smoke and Buttons," *Canadian Forum*, March 2000, pp. 29-31 (PDF pages [1-2-3](#))

1999

- * Patrice Loubier, "Pour une sculpture qui disparaît / For a Disappearing Sculpture" *Espace*, no. 50, Winter 1999-2000, pp. 6-11
- * "Diana Nemiroff picks Germaine Koh" in "8 for 2000," *The Globe and Mail* (Toronto), 6 November 1999, p. F1, F10
- * Keith Wallace, "The beauty of rupture: Artists of Asian descent and Canadian identity," *Art Asia Pacific*, no. 24, October 1999, pp. 66-73
- * Ihor Holubizky, "Spotlight: Germaine Koh", *Canadian Art*, Spring 1999, pp. 34-8 (PDF pages [1-2-3-4-5](#))

1998

- * Gillian MacKay, "Taking it to the streets", *The Globe and Mail*, 7 November 1998, p. E2
- * Hal Niedzviecki, "Pop: Product: Person: Cultural appropriation in the ad age", *Adbusters* (Vancouver), no. 21 (Spring 1998), pp. 22-30 ([link to article](#))

1997

* Jan Allen, "Germaine Koh: getting personal", *Art/Text* (Sydney), no. 59 (November 1997-January 1998), pp. 50-1

1996

* Interview with Hal Niezviecki, *Broken Pencil* (Toronto), no. 4, Winter 1997

1995

* Paul Lukas, "Inconspicuous Consumption," *New York Press*, 26 April-2 May 1995, p.12. Reprinted in *Beer Frame*, (New York), no. 5, 1995; in "Culture To Go", *City Pages* (Minneapolis), 1 May 1996, p.26; and in Lukas, *Inconspicuous Consumption* (New York: Crown, 1997), pp. 177-8

1994

* Kirk Finken, "Ad Hoc gallery: profile of an underdog", profile, *Ottawa XPress*, 6 April 1994, p.10

* Nancy Baele, "Gallery gives showcase for ad hoc spirit" artist/curator profile, *Ottawa Citizen*, 13 February 1994

ORGANIZING AND CRITICAL ACTIVITY

2001

* "Give Aways: a partial account," essay in *MIX* (Toronto), no. 27.2, Fall 2001, pp. 24-29

* Review for *Lola* (Toronto) no. 10, Fall 2001

* "Slipping In and Away," text project in *Les Commenseaux* (Montreal: Centre des arts actuels SKOL, 2001)

* "Private Thoughts / Public Moments" review, *Fuse* (Toronto), vol. 23, no. 4, p. 43-4

- * "Shelley Ouellet" and "Persona Volare" reviews, *Lola* (Toronto), no. 9, Summer 2001
- * "Havana Biennial" review, *Frieze* (London), no. 59, April 2001, p. 106-7
- * Co-organized (with Phil Klygo) *No Mercy: the Art-World Wrestling Federation Open Championships*, Mercer Union (Toronto)
- * "Soft Design for Mushy Thought," *MIX* (Toronto), no. 26.3, Winter, pp. 24-28

2000

- * Reviews for *Lola* (Toronto), no. 6, Spring 2000
- * Guest curator, *c/o la Ciudad*, [SAW Gallery](#) (Ottawa), travelling to Blackwood Gallery, University of Toronto Erindale Campus ([PDF brochure](#))

1999

- * "Stan Douglas", *ETC Montréal*, September-December 1999, pp. 54-7 ([PDF file](#))
- * "Threshold", *Parachute* (Montreal), no. 93, January-March 1999, p. 48-9 ([PDF file](#))

1998-99

- * Acting Assistant Curator, Contemporary Art, [National Gallery of Canada](#). Permanent collection installations, including *Landmarks* (1999) and *Disappearing Images* (1999). Publications: essays in *Crossings* (1998) (PDF files: [Kcho](#), [Jimmie Durham](#))

1998

- * Reviews for *Lola*, no. 3, Winter 1998
- * Guest curator, *Chaos Theories*, [SAW Gallery](#) (Ottawa)

1992-98

* Curatorial Assistant, National Gallery of Canada. Publication: "Miyajima: Thousand Road"

1993-97

* Part-time Professor, Visual Arts Department, University of Ottawa

1996

* "Lynne Cohen", *Contact Sheet* (Syracuse), no. 89 ([PDF file](#))

* Coordinator, "Asides: asian artists speak" lecture and screening series, SAW Gallery (Ottawa)

1995

* Session chair, "Downsizing: minimalism in the 90s", Universities Art Association of Canada

1995

* "Geographies of Desire," *C Magazine* (Toronto) no. 46

1994

* Guest curator (with Daniel Sharp), *Practice Ground*, Ottawa Art Gallery

1993-94

* Founder, ad hoc gallery, Ottawa

1993

* "Kirsten Mosher: Sandra Gering," *Flash Art International* (New York), January-February, p. 92

DEGREES RECEIVED

- * 1993 Master of Fine Arts, Hunter College of City University of New York
- * 1990 Bachelor of Arts (Theory and History of Art), University of Ottawa
- * 1989 Bachelor of Fine Arts (Studio), University of Ottawa

BIOGRAPHICAL

Canadian, no fixed address

Born 1967, Georgetown, Malaysia