

The many ways artists can contribute to the improvement of city life is becoming increasingly evident. Although it is widely known that artists can provide ideas for urban beautification projects, it is also clear that they can offer valuable perspectives for endeavours such as facilities planning and local activism. The notion of a creative city is something that many municipalities are embracing, yet it is important to think of this as more than a plan to encourage tourism or to jumpstart economics – creative thinking generates alternative points of view about the nature of community and life itself.

Communities are largely about daily relationships, including ones that are social, economic, political, spiritual, administrative, ethical, and even merely obligatory. Accordingly, *Trust Us, We're Artists* (TUWA) offers a variety of projects that rely on dialogue, physical participation, and trust to encourage audiences to abandon the assumptions and attitudes that sometimes hinder communication, new experiences, and even spontaneous fun. More generally, TUWA seeks to underscore the importance of contemporary art to everyday life as an invaluable mode of reflection, research, critique, and empowerment through performance-based interventions that will warm the heart and fire up the mind.

Tejpal S. Aji explores intersections between personal and social history, and issues concerning multiculturalism and community life. Among other things, his interdisciplinary practice investigates social welfare programs, particularly social housing.

The Oral Projects: Junction, Toronto is part of a multifaceted follow-up to his recent video, *Mouth House*, which addressed the economic instability of social housing by depicting the dissolving of a miniature house constructed out of breath freshening strips. *The Oral Projects: Junction, Toronto* features a sculptural model of the Junction community made from the same material, and colour coded in reference to civil planning protocols. The model becomes active through the engagement of participants who take one structure each, and allow it to dissolve on their tongues. Aji is interested in how the forms buckle and fold because of external forces such as moisture and heat, which are metaphors for economics, consumption, and the fragility of social interactions. All participants are welcome to contribute to the production of a video based on the activation of this work.

WaterWorks is a participatory action concerned with how monuments direct representation and interaction. As a deconstruction and democratization of the history of monuments, Aji will collaborate with participants to enact an outdoor fountain in a manner suggestive of a tableaux vivant involving common garden watering equipment. The form of the fountain will develop organically based on the number of participants, their ideas, and desires. *WaterWorks* is equally an occasion for cooperation, a reclamation of space on communal terms, and a spectacle.

Ulysses Castellanos aims to demystify established cultural constructs by inviting participants to join him in humorous situations and actions that debunk idealized images, concepts, and paradigms. For TUWA, he addresses issues of trust and community interaction through one-on-one exchanges.

The Bureau of Personal Guidance is an ongoing performance that invites passersby to engage in personal conversation with a stranger [the artist] through the offering of free advice. Castellanos' improvised office establishes an environment for these conversations that invites participants to step outside of daily activity. Participants direct each conversation to be as intimate or superficial as they wish. The effect of the scenario is comforting, and participants are sometimes prompted to become more aware of their decision-making processes concerning spontaneous social interaction.

Free Hugs invites participants to consider the complex nature of physical contact in public space. For this project, Castellanos offers passersby "free hugs" without the risk of exceeding personal limitations by inviting them to hug his cardboard look-alike. Castellanos then takes a photo of the participant as a souvenir of their (im)personal exchange. In an economic sense, hugs are usually free, but in a personal or emotional sense, hugging a stranger can feel like an invasion of physical space, privacy, and trust. Castellanos hopes that offering a safe zone between contact and distance will provide participants with a stepping-stone to achieving further closeness.

Kirsten Forkert creates spaces to observe how socio-economic structures can determine daily habits, perceptions, and interactions. She is concerned with how performance can encourage the identification and expansion of creative occupations of public spaces, and views audience participation is an important component to foster unexpected interactions.

Real Estate Office is a two-part project that engages residents in conversation about their views concerning community, place, property values, sense of entitlement, and sense of belonging. The conversations will also aim to explore how people feel the arts factors into each of these contexts. During the festival, Forkert will audio record the conversations and compile them into a digital sound file; the following day, she will make the file available for download via internet. The URL hosting the podcast is <http://www.cultureandrealstate.blogspot.com>. This information will be communicated on business cards and it will be printed on posters featuring excerpts of the interviews, which will be distributed throughout the neighborhood. Forkert envisions *Real Estate Office* as the start of an ongoing, open conversation.

Jessica MacCormack and Hazel Meyer are interested in exploring the capacity for performance and intervention to reveal new contexts and forms of interpretation. Additionally, they are concerned with definitions of social space and methods of creating unique frameworks for social interaction.

In contemporary society, is it common for consumerism to step in as a mediator for loss; however, when it does, the relationship between loss and change is denied. *The MacMeyer Palliative Project* (TMMPP) aims to address this by creating empathetic objects, actions, and ceremonies in honour of day-to-day loss. Working within the comfort-zones of participants, TMMPP will collaborate with each individual to identify and articulate personal experiences of loss that will result in artistic activities creating contexts for exchange, dialogue, and validation. In keeping with the principles of palliative care, they propose to offer relief (as opposed to a cure) by inserting fun into current the cultural paradigm of loss. As described by the artists, TMMPP is a playful, socio-artistic experiment intended as an ongoing project that will include an open-access, anonymous archive to document and facilitate subjective interpretation of the items created in response to individual loss.

All visitors to the Junction Arts Festival are welcome to participate in these projects! Please refer to the map for the site of each one, and speak with the artists for more details.

> **Milena Placentile**, Curator

Acknowledgements

The Festival is planned and organized by The Junction Forum for Arts and Culture – a local non-profit organization dedicated to promoting the arts. The curator and the artists would like to thank the Junction BIA and the Junction Forum for Arts and Culture for welcoming them to the 14th Annual Junction Arts Festival. They would also like to thank Attention Design, High Park Architects, and the West Toronto Fire Department No. 423 (The Junction) for collaborating in the presentation of the artists' projects.

Trust Us We're Artists

Tejpal S. Ajji, Jessica MacCormack & Hazel Meyer,
Kirsten Forkert, Ulysses Castellanos
Curated by Milena Placentile

3RD ANNUAL CURATED EXHIBITION ~ 14TH ANNUAL JUNCTION ARTS FESTIVAL

The 14th Annual Junction Arts Festival is pleased to host its third Curated Exhibition; an exciting and innovative program of the overall festival, which brings provocative contemporary art to the street. Following the success of the past two Curated Exhibitions, *Trust Us, We're Artists* features work by emerging and mid-career Canadian artists who have exhibited locally, nationally, and internationally. Many thanks to the curator, Milena Placentile and to this year's major sponsor, the Junction Business Improvement Area.

Carmen Victor

Director of Publicity and Curated Exhibition Coordinator, Junction Forum for Arts & Culture

Keele St



1

Pacific Ave

Keele St



Mavety St

Medland St

Pacific Ave

High Park Ave

Quebec Ave

Dundas St West



3

Vine Ave



4

McMurray Ave

Quebec Ave

TEJPAL S. AJJI's interdisciplinary work explores a range of subjects including inter-racial conflict, social assistance programs, and public housing projects. Ajji holds a Diploma in Arts Practice from the Sheridan Institute of Technology and a Bachelor of Arts Honours from the University of Toronto.

1

> DUNDAS ST W / KEELE ST

HAZEL MEYER is an accomplished eater, textile designer, and artist living and working in Montréal. With a background in textiles and performance, she combines various elements of costume, embellishment, and athletics to create projects they defy and celebrate social aesthetics.

JESSICA MACCORMACK combines elements of interactivity, performance, intervention, installation, and video to investigate social spaces and to disrupt concepts of normalcy. Later this year, she will begin an MFA through the Public Art & New Artistic Strategies program at Bauhaus University (Weimar, Germany).

2

> ATTENTION DESIGN - 2928 DUNDAS ST W

KIRSTEN FORKERT is an artist, writer, and organizer, currently based in Sweden, where she is participating in the Critical Studies program at Malmö Art Academy. Her work deals with the subjective experience of neoliberalism, using conversations and interviews as a form.

3

> HIGH PARK ARCHITECTS - 3000 DUNDAS ST W

ULYSSES CASTELLANOS was born in Latin America in the late sixties. He spent his childhood skipping school and traveling by bus through the streets of San Salvador, which in his opinion, was the best art education anybody could want. He also holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the University of Toronto.

4

> JUNCTION GARDENS BIA - 3042 DUNDAS ST W

MILENA PLACENTILE is an independent curator and writer. She holds a Master of Museum Studies from the University of Toronto and is currently affiliated with SMART Project Space, Amsterdam.