

VANCOUVER ART & ECONOMIES

Edited by
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PREFACE

Since the mid-1980s, the once marginal city of Vancouver has developed within a globalized economy and become an internationally recognized centre for contemporary visual art. Vancouver's status is due not only to a thriving worldwide cultural community that has turned to examine the so-called periphery, but to the city's growth, its artists, expanding institutions, and a strong history of introspection and critical assessment. As a result, Vancouver art is visible and often understood as distinct and definable. This anthology, *Vancouver Art & Economies*, intends to complicate the notion of definability. It offers essays on diverse topics to address the organized systems that have affected contemporary art in Vancouver over the last two decades.

It has been over fifteen years since Stan Douglas edited *Vancouver Anthology: The Institutional Politics of Art* (1991), a compilation of Vancouver art histories that were linked through what Douglas called "their common preoccupation: a critique of the institutionalization of previously alternative art activities in North America...." The length of time that has passed since *Vancouver Anthology* was published was not the sole impetus for another critical assessment of Vancouver art; the need for this book was further compounded by a perceived increase in the professionalization of Vancouver artists and institutions. Signaling another level of institutionalization, Vancouver (and global) culture can be said to look toward the homogenizing effects of corporate enterprise and systems of privatization, whether in non-profit organizations, educational systems, intellectual concerns, or commercial structures. The essays in *Vancouver Art & Economies* collectively remark, both compatibly and contradictorily, on the economies at work in Vancouver art—its historical, critical, and political engagement; its sites of cultural production; and its theoretical and practical intersection with technology or policy. Considering a selection of conditions, focuses, and resources within the community, this anthology is intended to function as a marker of shifting ideologies and perspectives on art, politics, society, and capital in this city.

There have been a number of publications that consider Vancouver and its recent visual arts culture. Among these are *Vancouver: Representing the Postmodern City* (1994), which took stock of the city's culture in general; *Stan Douglas: Every Building on 100 West Hastings* (2002), which examined the city through Douglas's photograph of the same name; and a selection of local exhibitions and accompanying catalogues that contribute

to the ongoing definition of Vancouver art, such as the Vancouver Art Gallery's *Topographies: Aspects of Recent B.C. Art* (1996), and the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery's *6: New Vancouver Modern* (1998). Additionally, international exhibitions have investigated recent Vancouver art within international and local contexts, including *Baja to Vancouver: the West Coast and Contemporary Art* (2003), organized by the Vancouver Art Gallery and three American institutions, and *Intertidal: Vancouver Art and Artists* (2005), organized by the Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst Antwerpen with the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery.

While this book relies on the contributions of these and other publications, *Vancouver Art & Economies* takes *Vancouver Anthology* as its model. Both books originated from artist-run centres—the Or Gallery in 1991 and Artspeak in 2007—and a series of public lectures that allowed the anthology contributors to vet their ideas before an interested community, effectively building on the history of critical dialogue between artists, writers, curators, and others. The first series was held in 1991 at the Western Front, and the second in 2005 at Emily Carr Institute; lectures from both were reworked into publications. Vancouver is hungry to talk and hear about itself, and if audience attendance at the lectures is any indication, *Vancouver Art & Economies* is, I am sure, only one of many future looks at Vancouver art.

The topics I originally proposed to the writers sought to highlight the key changes Vancouver art has witnessed or undergone in the last two decades; these topics were then honed by the writers. They include: locating contemporary Vancouver art within its own international history and acknowledging recent legacies; examining Vancouver art within a contemporary political economy; assessing the particulars of writing about Vancouver art; considering art's practical and theoretical relationship to technology; approaching various subjectivities in local production; problematizing the bureaucracy of cultural diversity; taking stock of the role and definition of artist-run centres; and tracing the rise of commercial galleries as cultural producers. The result is a collection of essays that operate as a snapshot, or an album of snapshots, of Vancouver art.

Given this photo album analogy, it is crucial to note that such a compendium is subjective and incomplete by definition. There are additional anthologies that could be compiled on topics that lie both within and beyond this framework to address the increasingly diverse concerns of the Vancouver art community. This publication capitalizes on an existing multifaceted dialogue and the writers were selected accordingly. Amongst the issues that are not addressed are a reconsideration of the city's physical landscape (the well-worn city/wilderness dichotomy); a reassessment of women or First Nations artists in Vancouver art; an examination of the role of the Vancouver Art Gallery, universities, art schools, and collectors; and a close look at the art market system—all of which play into a larger picture of Vancouver's art economies. These topics we leave to future analyses.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to the nine writers who delivered their papers to a public audience and have produced considered essays for this publication: Clint Burnham, Randy Lee Cutler, Tim Lee, Sadira Rodrigues, Marina Roy, Sharla Sava, Reid Shier, Shepherd Steiner, and Michael Turner.

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—Melanie O'Brian

INTRODUCTION:
SPECIOUS SPECULATION

Melanie O'Brian

Vancouver's identity has been shaped by more than a century of speculation. At once risky and analytic, Vancouver's commercial and theoretical modes of inquiry have yielded numerous opportunities for the city to reinvent itself. Its rapid change and growth has been a result of remote ventures in that it has been colonized, developed, and largely supported by global migrations of financial and cultural capital.¹ As the frontier terminus of a westward expansion of European colonization and, more recently, as an entry point from Asia, Vancouver has sought (and made) its fortune through ventures that require a belief in risk and progress, such as timber, mining, fishing, gold, tourism, technology, and most characteristically, real estate and land development.² These industries have been instrumental in the short history of British Columbia and although the province's economy remains based on natural resources, the city's economy has largely given way to the service sector and is thus attracting investment that relies on status and cultural assets. As Vancouver's speculative focus turns from extraction industries to abstract, symbolic economies contingent on the forces of globalization, the city's desire for world status has prompted it to seek an international stage for validation.

The recent history of Vancouver has been, and is being, shaped by two events that position the city in the spotlight. The first was the transportation and communication-themed Expo '86 World's Fair that commemorated Vancouver's centennial; the second is the upcoming 2010 Olympic Winter Games. While the Olympics have not yet taken place, they have produced enough public consideration that it is safe to say that they will be a defining factor of the city's cultural and economic evolution. In the twenty years since Expo '86 visited upon Vancouver promises of progress and global recognition, the event has been acknowledged as contributing greatly to Vancouver's deputization as a "world-class" city. As the impetus for significant investment and development, Expo '86 was a catalyst that prompted a new downtown trade and convention centre; the establishment of a rapid transit system; the British Columbia government's purchase of property on Vancouver's False Creek North to stage the fair; the subsequent selling of the Expo grounds to a condominium developer; the building of the Coquihalla Highway that connected Vancouver to the province's interior; expanded tourist facilities and services; and raised public expectations.³ Expo '86 helped to define the city, and it appears that its promises have been largely realized, given the interna-

tional acknowledgment of Vancouver, including the awarding of the 2010 Olympics in 2003, and *The Economist* naming it the most livable city in the world in 2005.⁴

Preparations for the upcoming Olympics are coinciding with widespread new development in Vancouver that echoes the Expo '86 era: another convention centre; expansion of the rapid transit system; development of Southeast False Creek into an Olympic Athletes' Village that will be later sold as market housing; condominium developments in Yaletown, Gastown, and areas spreading east ("Be Bold or Move to the Suburbs" was the campaign slogan for the redevelopment of the Woodward's complex in the city's Downtown Eastside); and the expansion of the Sea to Sky Highway to Whistler, as well as event-related construction and upgrading of recreational facilities.⁵

This construction boom is helping to increase the city's population density, but may also be laying the groundwork for a privatized resort city.⁶ Since the 1970s, the City of Vancouver has had numerous planning objectives to repopulate the downtown core; the residential densification plan took hold in the 1980s when commercial development slowed and rezoning allowed for condominium towers instead. The residential property market was driven at this time by a wave of Asian investment from Taiwan, Singapore, Japan, and most notably Hong Kong, which precipitated an increase in the pace and scale of development,⁷ but the intense construction on the downtown peninsula has yielded largely upscale homes.⁸ The lack of affordable housing downtown is pushing less affluent populations out of the city, as well as forcing workers to commute to and from the suburbs.

Land developers hold a central place in the history of Vancouver's civic leadership and the city's evolution, from its inception through to Expo '86 and the Olympics. Olympic profits are typically privatized while its losses are socialized; in many Olympic host cities, the Games' legacy includes artificially inflated real estate prices, a decrease in low-income housing stock due to gentrification, the criminalization of poverty and homelessness, and the privatization of public spaces.⁹ Although the development that occurs alongside the Olympics is rationalized as an accelerator for better standards of living, in other Olympic cities this has been an empty promise. The loss of Vancouver's low-income housing stock has been an ongoing issue since the 1970s, with social housing unable to keep up with the rate of demolition of low-cost housing units.¹⁰ This has been exacerbated by the 1993 abolishment of federal housing programs and the 2001 provincial cuts to the social housing program, as well as ongoing decreases to social welfare programs. At the same time, our governments have not been prioritizing culture; instead their programs reflect a possible "twilight" of the welfare state. In the current climate, the arts (like housing, health care, and numerous other social services) are not well supported at the federal, provincial, or municipal levels, while corporate

models for running public institutions as businesses are encouraged.¹¹ The results of this trend are seen not only in the development instigated by Expo '86 and the Olympics. In 1991, in the introduction to *Vancouver Anthology: The Institutional Politics of Art*, Stan Douglas remarked on a widespread and increasing privatization affecting the social and cultural fabric of Vancouver. The consequences of this most recent wave of speculation remain to be seen, but it appears that a corporate model influences the reshaping of the city and its identity.

Unlimited Growth

... the economy of art closely reflects the economy of finance capital.

—Julian Stallabrass¹²

... anyone who wishes to understand how the economy functions and what effect it has on everyday life should turn to contemporary art.

—Olav Velthuis¹³

In light of Vancouver's speculative development ethos, an investigation into the city's art economies must surely reflect aspects of the city's political and business principles. An assessment of recent art in Vancouver calls for an examination of the financial, political, social, and intellectual economies at work, and necessitates contextualization within a city that is growing (population and construction-wise) and at the same time delimiting the nature of that growth. It may be useful to compare Vancouver's urban development to the state of contemporary art in the city, as both the urban and art economies speculate on "good appearances." The city is gambling on its future *vis-à-vis* the Olympics by presenting to the world a cleaned-up image of itself absent of social inequities. In doing so, the city reveals how marginalized groups, even the art community, may be vulnerable in the urban development scheme. However, this development has brought forward both opportunities and challenges for the city's non-profit groups. Although arts groups in Vancouver continue to rely on public sector funding to various degrees, they also seek other sources of support to promote long-term stability, specifically through the private sector.¹⁴

The demands of funders and supporters are helping to determine the parameters by which art, artists, and institutions function. Growth has been a shared desire by both supporters and by individual artists and institutions in the system. Although many in Vancouver have had a strong voice in the contestation of the privatization and institutionalization of

art, it is inevitable that art will at some point adopt the language of those it seeks to criticize. Stan Douglas writes: "It is the predicament of any group of people who want to contest the actions of a social institution by speaking that institution's language and who may, thereby, run the risk of becoming bound to their antagonist, as they mirror its form and more than a few of its contents."¹⁵ Institutional critique can be seen as a trope of the last two decades, and it has become increasingly acknowledged that the artist's role is similarly institutionalized. Artist Andrea Fraser has observed that corporate expansion "is producing an institutional monoculture of management and marketing that's destroying the diversity not only of culture but also of social and economic relations." She argues that artists are trained in a manner that is "the very model for labour in the new economy ... highly educated, highly motivated 'self-starters' ... convinced that we work for ourselves and our own satisfaction even when we work for others."¹⁶ Even in critique and innovation, contemporary art (taken as a whole) is complicit in these homogenizing migrations.

Ostensibly existing outside the effects of an international art scene or the art market, Vancouver has been perceived as a peripheral city that manages to produce remarkable artists without the powerful promotional systems evident in cities like New York or London. It might be argued that Vancouver has now shed its previous status as marginal and arrived on the international art map, commercial endeavors playing an increasingly significant role in its growth and maturation.¹⁷ The tactic toward internationalism is another sign of Vancouver's changing art economy, and reflects a larger move within the city and province to recognize the benefits of culture to the general economy. Given the effects of globalization on Vancouver, the art world mirrors a shifting aspiration toward the international that can be attributed to a least two significant factors. First, that the visual arts, as part of the cultural sector, have been identified as contributing to the gross domestic product,¹⁸ and second, that the international success of a handful of Vancouver artists has set a benchmark for interested outsiders as well as for subsequent generations of Vancouver artists.

The period bracketed by Expo '86 and the Olympics marks transformations largely associated with the rise of globalization. Within the art world, the effect of the rise of international biennials, art fairs, and a "star" system not only implicates a handful of local artists but curators, collectors, and students.¹⁹ While contemporary art's concerns are both responses to broader economic and political transformations as well as to internal dialogues, they do not stand outside the economy's rules or its establishment of hierarchies of wealth and power. Instead, art is often used to reaffirm these rules. The proliferation of professionalizing art schools reveals their programs and degrees to be part of the professionalized art economy. Art's perceived critical freedom is (literally) bought into through ownership and patronage, and the growing industries of

education (art schools and universities), cultural tourism (museums), and marketing (from real estate to technology) increasingly betrays the business aspect of culture. Vancouver has not only seen an influx of capital, investment, residents, and attention, but has responded to this interest by offering a professionalized city, which includes a polished and authoritative culture.

In this climate of expansion, the Vancouver art community and its institutions have grown, diversified, stabilized, and many, including the Vancouver Art Gallery (VAG), are eager to establish an international presence. The VAG is looking at expanding, having outgrown its neo-classical home, and is considering a new, purpose-built, architecturally significant building. In the last five years, under Director Kathleen Bartels, its aspirations have become far-reaching, promoting internationalization, and it uses the success of Vancouver artists as leverage to appeal to a global art community. Compared to the complaints the VAG received in the early 1980s that then Director Luc Rombout was ignoring local artists,²⁰ today Vancouver artists (both established and emerging) are buoyed by the institution, their work floated out into international waters with the help of larger commercial and international networks. The VAG is also popularizing art in the city, mixing the visual art scene with marketing, design, music, and performative events in what appears to be successful cultural branding for a mainstream audience.²¹ Along with the development of Vancouver's largest visual arts institution, the city has also accommodated the growth of mid-sized art galleries. In 1995, the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery opened a rededicated building to replace the University of British Columbia's Fine Arts Gallery and later initiated a downtown satellite space. The Contemporary Art Gallery has also built a presence in Vancouver; in 1996 it transitioned from an artist-run centre to a public gallery and after moving to a new location in 2001 has become increasingly visible. In this vein, it has been argued that Vancouver's many artist-run centres, the bulk of which were established in the 1980s, have also become mini-institutions with stable funding, permanent staff, career curators, and an eye toward internationalism.²²

What are some of the factors that have prompted this expansion and increased professionalization? In late twentieth-century Britain and the United States, contemporary art gained material and symbolic currency in corporate and political systems.²³ In the 1980s, a new model for how the visual arts functioned within society became obvious; "...artworks came to be seen as investment products, art buyers as speculators and artists as superstars...."²⁴ This was largely driven by a corporate system, switching the artistic consciousness of the 1980s away from the public domain toward the harnessing of corporate capital.²⁵ Reaganomics and Thatcherism yielded buzzwords like efficiency, deregulation, privatization, and enterprise culture; and the systems of art marketing and institutional fundraising began to proliferate. This made it possible to shift

ideological perspectives and view the relationships between the artist, artwork, institution, and public in economic terms. The resulting changes in public arts funding, particularly in Britain and the US, moved toward free-market policies and pro-business ideologies. While this is less apparent in the Canadian system due to the support of the Canada Council for the Arts and other public funding agencies, the ideological shift has become increasingly normalized.

While there is extreme mobility in the art market, the art world's distribution of power has a strong resemblance to the economic and political world. Julian Stallabrass writes: "Art prices and the volume of art sales tend to match the stock markets closely, and it is no accident that the world's major financial centres are also the principal centres for the sale of art. To raise this parallel is to see art not only as a zone of purposeless free play but as a minor speculative market in which art works are used for a variety of instrumental purposes, including investment, tax avoidance, and money laundering."²⁶ Certainly cultural, social, and market economies are inextricably entwined—it is consistent with the cliché of the Medici's use of art for power, influence, and affiliation—but the way in which corporate culture has meshed with the visual arts to promote development by a powerful new creative class reflects the specific conditions of an era. Vancouver, like other cities, is developing its cultural capital, which in turn helps the economy by attracting investment. The creative class (this so-called class includes "knowledge workers" such as educators, scientists, lawyers, architects, designers, and artists, among others) is considered a key force in the economic development of post-industrial cities by creating outcomes in new ideas (such as technology) that assist with regional growth. The development of a creative class in a city encourages identities that serve big business and forces the comingling of corporate, cultural, and other economies.²⁷

As Vancouver moves from a resource to a service-based economy (its current distinctive economic structure, emblematic of late capitalism, is based on what economists call dynamic services, meaning that it thrives without producing visible or substantial goods),²⁸ visual art maintains a dialogue with these developments. It can be observed that the work of Vancouver's most prominent photoconceptual artists has depicted Vancouver's shifting economy from its foundation on the exploitation of natural resources to the industries of the postmodern world. While commenting on both the history of art and the "landscape of the economy," these artists address the transformative effects of modernity on the city and its landscape, while simultaneously employing the staging and technology of film (another distinctive aspect of the local economy; Vancouver is often termed Hollywood North). The work of a younger generation of Vancouver artists can be characterized as focusing less on the city and its landscapes, looking instead to contemporary cultural patterns and the globalized secondary and tertiary markets of manufactured and

intangible goods and services. These artists engage with representations and simulacra, not only alluding to the increasing influence of the global market and the film industry on their cultural situation, but also to a self-conscious understanding of their place in history. Examples of this type of work include cultural hybrids that navigate the territory between the commodity and the artifact, apparent readymades that address the construction of art systems, or strategies that trouble the issues of cultural translation through iconic moments in North American popular culture.

In Vancouver, art's instrumentalization is a fairly young exploit, as contemporary visual art and culture have not been strongly recognized or supported, let alone used for political or corporate gain. However, the kind of showcasing of culture by events such as Expo and the Olympics are often specious, mainstream, and uncritical.²⁹ Vancouver's lack of private support through the local market has forced artists to export their work to Europe and the US. Vancouver has not had a substantial visual art market to speak of, but the city has several commercial galleries that are brokering the careers of local artists with an eye to the larger world. The city has also produced a handful of private foundations and corporate supporters,³⁰ but the type of political and corporate instrumentalization that has occurred elsewhere, such as in the Guggenheim Museum's expansion or Bloomberg in London, is still in its nascent stages in Vancouver. That said, the goals of local institutions and galleries are decidedly international and not only follow precedents set in the art world for global reach, but corporate examples as well. Chin-tao Wu notes this shift in the art institution, citing the Guggenheim's multi-venue spread—from New York to Venice, Las Vegas, Bilbao, Berlin, and now possibly Hong Kong—as indicative of a growing pattern: "If Guggenheim is the epitome of the nineties' art institutions that envisage their futures ... as being multinational museums, it inevitably sees itself in terms similar to those of a multinational [corporation]. Once business vocabulary and corporate sets of values enter an art institution, its theatre of operations will inevitably be also dominated by the ethos and practices of multinationals."³¹

Despite burgeoning corporate structures, the Vancouver art world has been largely self-determined, government funded, and there has always been a vein of resistance to the corporate ethos. If, as I am claiming, the art economy has become increasingly reliant on the promotional apparatus of big business, in Vancouver certain voices have maintained critical stances in their resistance to the valuation of profit over critical or social responsibility. For example, a text work conceived by the owner of the Del Mar Inn, George Riste, and artist Kathryn Walter comments on the survival of his rooming hotel within the redevelopment of the city block that envelops it. Located on the exterior of Riste's building—which formerly housed the Contemporary Art Gallery and now is the home of the Belkin Satellite Gallery—the text work reads "Unlimited Growth Increases the Divide" and is "directed at those who operate our free-market economy

in their own interests, while excluding those interests that would be 'responsive to the needs of the community.'"³² Riste maintains his Edwardian building to provide affordable accommodation on the upper floors and space for a non-profit gallery on the main floor. Despite hundreds of offers to buy his property, Riste refuses to sell (in the late 1980s, BC Hydro, which has owned all the land around the Del Mar Inn since 1981, persistently tried to buy Riste's building in order to knock it down for a proposed office tower). Riste's personal support of low-income housing and culture is made clear by Walter's text, and is as pertinent today as it was at the time of its installation in 1990.

When the Contemporary Art Gallery moved from the Del Mar Inn to the ground floor of a new Yaletown condominium development in 2001,³³ Brian Jungen rethought Walter's statement for his exhibition at the new space. Jungen's work, *Unlimited Growth Increases the Divide*, was similarly conceived for the exterior of the new gallery to draw attention to the specific conditions of the site. Temporarily mimicking the plywood hoardings that signal construction in the city, Jungen cut holes in the hoarding to direct one's view back to the street, framing the progress of development in the urban environment, particularly referencing the boom of condominium building that has taken place in Yaletown since Expo '86. Few areas of Vancouver have been as emblematic of the city's development, particularly in contrast to the stagnation and decline of other neighbourhoods.³⁴

Mirroring

All art is at once surface and symbol.

Those who go beneath the surface do so at their peril.

Those who read the symbols do so at their peril.

It is the spectator, and not life, that art really mirrors.

—Oscar Wilde³⁵

Extolling symbolic values over material ones, postmodern economies promote the consumption of the abstract. Art, like money, is a symbolic system, its value socially constructed, aided by marketing and branding. Art economies have taken up the language of advertising to generate audience growth and support, which has manifested in the labeling of practices from specific locales or generations (e.g., "Vancouver art" or "slacker art"), the selling of a lifestyle associated with knowledge, exclusivity, and status. The local art economy is not immune to the scenes that are created around contemporary production, threatening to tip serious work into a melting pot of aesthetic and intellectual posturing. As the city's art community grows and diversifies, a positive result is a greater number of voices and the dissolution of a perceived monolith, yet in this diversifica-

tion there is a desire to appeal to a common denominator, and as a result serious debate and discourse can get lost amid the hyperbole.

In what appear to be successful campaigns to reach a wider public as well as entice sponsorship, Vancouver institutions have adopted a more corporate model of marketing. The Vancouver Art Gallery's exhibitions are often sponsored by corporations or financial institutions whose logos appear prominently on title walls, in catalogues, and newsletters. The VAG undertakes advertising campaigns that aggressively combine media coverage and prominent print advertisements, and have mounted design programming that uses a marketing model for display as well as promotion. For example, the VAG's 2004 project *Massive Change: The Future of Global Design* was constructed and publicized as its own brand, a package that included displays on two floors of the gallery, a website, book, speaker series, film, and radio show.³⁶ The Contemporary Art Gallery also receives a high level of corporate sponsorship and has produced two exhibitions conceived by an advertising firm.³⁷ These examples only begin to demonstrate the incorporation of marketing vocabularies into the realm of the non-profit cultural institution, and are by no means singular.

Vancouver's desire for recognition is not only reflected in the events such as Expo '86 that seek to bring the world to Vancouver, but also in the cultural products we export. While Vancouver is well pictured by local artists, its image is often exported via the film industry as a stand-in for other cities (almost always American). Television has largely followed suit; however, there are two notable exceptions to this pattern that are emblematic of a changing local identity. The drama *The Beachcombers* (1972–89, the longest-running series of its sort in Canadian television) at one time presented to an international audience a specifically British Columbian identity, a representation of a rural, ocean-reliant way of life that has been replaced in more recent television programs by a focus on the city and its globalized crises. *Da Vinci's Inquest* (1998–2005) and *Da Vinci's City Hall* (2005) were based largely on real-life politics in Vancouver, mirroring the city's current events. Taking the experiences of the city's former chief coroner, later city mayor, as a starting point, the series "documented" Vancouver as politically and economically complex, often corrupt and addicted, participating in the global drug, sex, and goods trades. Both shows had strong international appeal in their representation of changes in local politics, multiculturalism, and industry. However, the specific (and perhaps exotic to international audiences) British Columbia of *The Beachcombers* yielded to representations of a city that shares global pressures with other urban centres around the world. This shift in appearances from *The Beachcombers* to *Da Vinci's Inquest*—from provincial to global, from the focus on issues of primary to tertiary industries—provides another marker of a mutating Vancouver.

Within this period of growing international reputation, art and artists in Vancouver were branded, concurrent with the rise of a culture of

designer labels and market research.³⁸ Since the mid-1980s, Rodney Graham, Ken Lum, Jeff Wall, and Ian Wallace (and sometimes Roy Arden and Stan Douglas) have been entangled and exported under the Vancouver School label. French art historian Jean-Francois Chevrier is cited as being responsible for the designation, which is at once useful and erroneous, a term that could only be achieved from a distanced, outside perspective and in conjunction with other such “schools” of practice or thought. It has been argued that this label arose at a moment when consumer labeling—not only for products but for cities and lifestyles—became ever more important to marketers.³⁹ The assignation functioned to represent Vancouver to an international art world, establishing a benchmark for the manner in which Vancouver art is to be understood. The vehicles for the presentation of Vancouver art include important international museum exhibitions, biennials, and art fairs, pointing to an ideological construct that follows a world’s fair or Expo model to promote identities that serve a dominant paradigm. The artists held under the Vancouver School umbrella do not often exhibit their work in Vancouver and are represented by galleries in New York, London, and Frankfurt rather than in Vancouver (or Canada, for that matter).⁴⁰ Thus, the market economy for their work exists internationally, while their intellectual economy is constructed between home and away.

When considering the branding of Vancouver and Vancouver art by external forces, it is perhaps useful to consider mirroring as a form of speculation. There is identification, in Vancouver, with what is seen in the mirror. Cast as a picturesque site of rich resources and a producer of serious art that reflects on its physical location within a globalized milieu, Vancouver rises to meet these expectations. This has an impact on art that has been produced in the shadow of the Vancouver School, under a different brand that might be called Vancouver Art. As Marina Roy has noted in her essay for this publication, a *Canadian Art* article asserted: “When you collect one of her [Catriona Jeffries] artists—say a Ron Terada or a Damian Moppett—you are ostensibly ‘collecting Vancouver.’”⁴¹ It appears that Vancouver Art signifies the work of a younger generation of artists, a group separate from the Vancouver School but defined by a similar set of rules that speculate on its history. Vancouver Art has come to designate a group of self-reflexive artists, largely in their thirties, who reference and scrutinize not only their artistic position, but also their historical situation, location, and culture.⁴² The label Vancouver Art again raises the problem of regionalism, but the work of these artists reaches beyond the local to engage in critique and satire legible to a global audience. It has been argued by many that the successful work coming out of Vancouver has international currency in its aesthetic and conceptual strategies, though artists such as Ron Terada continue to call attention to how Vancouver artists are identified in terms of a local brand for the purposes of commerce and publicity.⁴³

The success and consequential mirroring of the Vancouver School—and now Vancouver Art—has led to a palpable atmosphere of careerism in this city’s art economy.⁴⁴ The patterning of success relies on externally generated accolades for artists who are often promoted through the “outside” view. For example, the local marketing campaign for Brian Jungen’s *vag* exhibition foregrounded a quote from the *Washington Post*, positioning Jungen as “one of today’s most interesting and widely acclaimed younger artists.” While Vancouver takes pride in its self-determined, boom-and-bust identity, it seems that we remain impressionable, malleable to outside forces; we identify with how we are described, even as we resist it. Although Vancouver’s art community has attempted to avoid typification, it must be acknowledged that a publication of this sort also plays into the branding of Vancouver, even given the current line of questioning.

In this post-Expo, pre-Olympic moment, Vancouver is again speculating on its future. And Vancouver art, despite the self-awareness and criticality written into its systems, is not unaffected by the language and forces of development or the marketing of place. A growing component of the abstract economy of “dynamic services,” Vancouver art is at once a sector to be considered in terms of monetary value and growth, while it also has the potential to maintain a critical autonomy, apart from the systems of big business and the pressures of politics. It might be said that art’s autonomy is contingent on the fact that it, in and of itself, has little agency. Art’s strength lies in its reflection on the world; it represents social and subjective realities in images, texts, and situations that document, digest, and critique. But art has not typically intervened or taken an active role in the production of political realities, despite its instrumentalization. It is the very uselessness of art that allows it to reveal something of the world, and indeed something of the viewer. In mirroring, it reflects the values that have become dominant in Western culture: “The dollar is now the yardstick of cultural authority....”⁴⁵ Perhaps the alignment of the art economy with the market economy is inevitable, but art will always seek alternative structures and spaces for analytic, vital inquiry. If contemporary art is contradictorally complicit with and resistant to privatizing developments, new economies and publics will surface to address this paradox. And perhaps real potential lies in accepting these inherent conflicts. As the world continues to focus on Vancouver, Vancouver art will speculate on its place in the world.

1. A young port city on the Pacific coast, Vancouver has developed into Canada's third largest metropolitan centre in its short history. The city was first settled in the 1860s, largely as a result of the Fraser Canyon Gold Rush, and developed from a small lumber mill town into an urban hub following the arrival of the transcontinental railway in 1887. See Paul Delany, ed. *Vancouver: Representing the Postmodern City* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1994): 1. For histories pertinent to Vancouver's recent development, see Lance Berelowitz, *Dream City: Vancouver and the Global Imagination* (Vancouver/Toronto/Berkeley: Douglas & McIntyre, 2005); and John Punter, *The Vancouver Achievement: Urban Planning and Design* (Vancouver/Toronto: ubc Press, 2003).

2. Berelowitz notes that land speculation began at Vancouver's inception, as the earliest District Lots (1860s) were flipped, subdivided, resold, and developed by different owners at different times. "Real estate is Vancouver's true passion, its real blood sport....": 95.

3. Gary Mason, *The Globe and Mail* (April 29, 2006): S1. Mason was assessing the impact of Expo '86 on the occasion of its twentieth anniversary. Punter lists a more complete set of Expo '86 related "results": 192.

4. www.bccanadaplace.gov.bc.ca. Ironically, at the same time Vancouver was (and is) the second most expensive Canadian city to live in, after Toronto.

5. In early 2006, the Vancouver City Council, led by Mayor Sam Sullivan, opted for less social housing in Southeast False Creek from the originally proposed one-third. This decision was reportedly made for economic gain, as the City projects a \$50 million return on the land when it is developed. Frances Bula, *Vancouver Sun* (January 21, 2006): B11. The current City

website (city.vancouver.bc.ca/olympicvil-lage) claims that 25% of the 1,000 units will become affordable housing after the games.

6. The notion that Vancouver may become a resort city is attributed to Trevor Boddy's observations in a lecture entitled "Vancouverism, Civic Space, and Dubai's Very False Creek," June 16, 2006, Presentation House Gallery, on the occasion of the opening of the exhibition *Territory* (a co-production with Artspeak). Boddy touches on a fear that the disproportionate number of high-rise residences to commercial offices will result in a city that is for living in, not working in. The idea that aspects of Vancouver's recent development are modelled after resort structures is made clearer in Berelowitz's *Dream City* where he cites that the initial concepts for the development of the Expo lands posited "a resort in the city": 107.

7. Punter: 12–13, 85, 109, 218.

8. For example, only 15% of Yaletown's housing is classified as low-income (although the city sets goals for 20% or more in such developments). theyee.ca/Views/2006/02/27/ErasingOlympicImage/

9. Charlie Smith, "Olympic cities punish poor," *Georgia Straight* (Aug. 31 – Sept. 7, 2006): 17. Smith's article cites sociologist Helen Jefferson Lenskyj's paper "The Olympic (Affordable) Housing Legacy and Social Responsibility." Another example that aligns with Lenskyj's argument is the implementation of the Safe Streets Act in early 2005 that targets aggressive panhandlers.

10. Over 1,000 evictions occurred in the period prior to Expo '86, primarily from fifteen rooming hotels, despite the campaigns and lobbying by the Downtown Eastside Residents Association. This campaign gained international recogni-

tion and spoke out against the negative impacts of mega-projects and rezoning on low-income housing in central Vancouver. Punter: 192.

11. Here I am not only thinking of arts institutions, but other public/private developments such as private medical clinics. Nina Möntmann notes in her introduction to *Art and Its Institutions: Current Conflicts, Critique and Collaborations* (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2006) that "the backdrop for institutional constitution is to be found in the basic value structure of a society. Therefore the current eruptions of the welfare state are mirrored in various institutional changes, predominantly revolving around concepts of centralisation and privatisation.": 8.

12. Julian Stallabrass, *Art Incorporated: The Story of Contemporary Art* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2004): 4.

13. Olav Velthuis, *Imaginary Economics: Contemporary Artists and the World of Big Money* (Rotterdam: Nai Publishers, 2005): 12.

14. For example, the Vancouver Art Gallery's budget over the last two years indicates that approximately 32% of its annual budget is attributable to government grants and 68% is from other revenue that includes admissions, fundraising, the gallery store, memberships, public programs, sponsorships, and the foundation which is set up to receive bequests, donations, and gifts (source: VAG annual reports, 2004, 2005). The Contemporary Art Gallery's revenue budget ending in 2004 indicates that 48.8% is derived from grants and 51.6% is from private donations and generated income (source: Council for Business in the Arts Annual Survey of Public Museums and Art Galleries, 2003–2004). Artspeak's 2004 year-end financial statements show

that 84.4% of its budget is derived from grants and 11.6% is from private sources (source: I.E. Artspeak Gallery Society 2004 annual report).

15. Stan Douglas, "Introduction," *Vancouver Anthology: The Institutional Politics of Art* (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1991): 18.

16. Andrea Fraser quoted in Peter Suchin, "Art and its Institutions," *Art Monthly* (July–Aug 2006): 298. See Möntmann, ed. for complete essay. Andrea Fraser, "A museum is not a business. It is run in a businesslike fashion": 86–98.

17. It is for this reason that *Vancouver Art & Economies* includes a nascent history of Vancouver's commercial galleries. See Michael Turner's essay, "Whose Business Is It? Vancouver's Commercial Galleries and the Production of Art."

18. See Statistics Canada.

19. School programs (and their students) aspire to enter their graduates into the professional realm of art, whether as artists, curators, or arts administrators. The professional realm of art is meant to denote an art system of recognition that is confined to specific venues. Local educational programs have reflected the growth of the art economy. For example, in 1989 Vancouver's Emily Carr Institute received granting authority for Bachelor of Fine Arts degrees through the Open Learning Agency, but was not able to issue its degrees in its own name until 1994. In 2006, it admitted its first class of Masters of Applied Arts degree students. From its foundation in 1925 (as Vancouver School of Decorative and Applied Arts) to 1989, Emily Carr Institute offered diplomas. Curatorial programs are also on the rise, such as the University of British Columbia's Critical and Curatorial Studies program, which was established in 2001. It

should be noted that Emily Carr Institute, then Emily Carr College of Art & Design, had a short-lived diploma program in Curatorial Studies in the 1980s.

20. Douglas: 16.

21. This observation is not only confined to the VAG, but is indicative of a larger museum trend. "The welfare states may be shrinking, but certainly not the museum. The latter is rather fragmenting, penetrating ever more deeply and organically into the complex mesh of semiotic production. Its spin-off products—design, fashion, multimedia spectacle, but also relational technologies and outside-the-box consulting—are among the driving forces of the contemporary economy.... We are talking about museums that work, museums that form part of the dominant economy, and that change at an increasing rate of acceleration imposed by both the market and the state. Is it impossible to use this vast development of cultural activity for anything other than the promotion of tourism, consumption, the batch-processing of human attention and emotion?" Brian Holmes quoted in Nina Möntmann: 28.

22. See Reid Shier's essay, "Do Artists Need Artist-Run Centres?" in this anthology.

23. See Chin-tao Wu, *Privatising Culture: Corporate Art Intervention Since the 1980s* (London/New York: Verso, 2003): 6, for a considered study of the art economy's entanglement with business and the private sector in Britain and the United States.

24. Velthuis: 26.

25. Wu: 2–3.

26. Stallabrass: 5.

27. Pier Luigi Sacco, an Italian political economist, lectured at Simon Fraser University on June 21, 2006. His talk, entitled "Arts and the Economy: Vancouver at the Crossroads," spoke to a shifting economics

focused more on individual and cultural identity, pointing to the potentiality of arts and culture as powerful new drivers of the economy.

28. Delany: 11–12.

29. However, I must acknowledge that Arts Now: 2010 Legacies Now provided support for this publication. This fund was implemented to build the capacity for the arts in the years leading up to the Olympics, and provides a significant opportunity for project funding. Despite the fact that this fund will not be ongoing, its goal is to encourage and allow for increased production in the arts and culture community of this region.

30. For example, the Vancouver Foundation, the Hamber Foundation, the Koerner Foundation, and the Audain Foundation provide support to the arts. The Vancouver Foundation's Renaissance Fund matches non-profit funds and encourages corporate donations. Corporate supporters have become increasingly visible within larger institutions. In recent years, the Vancouver Art Gallery has had programming support from banks including RBC Financial Group and TD Bank Financial Group, developers such as Concord Pacific and Polygon, and other corporations including Mercedes-Benz and Weyerhaeuser.

31. Wu: 284. Also see Möntmann for a concise account of how the Guggenheim Museum is conceived and staged by politicians and sponsors: 10.

32. Bill Jeffries, "The Interventions of Kathryn Walter" (Vancouver: Contemporary Art Gallery, 1990) www.city.vancouver.bc.ca.

33. The public/private partnership in condominium development warrants another paper, but it is important to note that through the City of Vancouver's Private Development Program, new developments

are required to allocate \$.95 per buildable foot to art in public areas. This too offers opportunities for the arts within Vancouver's development.

34. It is an easy contrast to pit the residential, shopping, and restaurant development in Yaletown against the decline of the Downtown Eastside. But it is important to note that affordable housing is localized in the latter neighbourhood. In 2003, the Downtown Eastside had only 3% of the city's population, but 79% of all single room occupancy units and 22% of non-market housing. At the same time, social services, shelters, meal centres, and health agencies are concentrated in this area. Punter writes: "In the Downtown Eastside it is clear what has *not* been achieved in the last thirty years. The multiple exclusions induced by the gentrification and aestheticization of the city at large reinforce deeper and more pernicious social, economic, and political processes that have set the DTES on a spiral of social decline. These processes include globalization, labour-shedding, senior government's withdrawal from welfare provision and housing subsidies, municipal fiscal crises, and deep civic indifference to problems of poverty collectively." Punter: 283.

35. Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray and Other Writings by Oscar Wilde* (New York/Toronto/London/Sydney/Auckland: Bantam Books, 1982): 3.

36. William Wood, "Massive Change: The Future of Global Design," *Parachute* 118 (Spring 2005): 7-8. Wood discusses the branding of curator Bruce Mau's

projects under the umbrella of *Massive Change*, their marketability, and their use by the VAG. Wood writes that show's "slogans came thick and fast as in a pitch, heading breathlessly towards the sort of uncomfortable silence that closes a motivational seminar.": 8. Wood closes his review with the conclusion that the only display institution that would support this type of *exposition* (not exhibition) is the contemporary art museum. "A science museum would question the research; a local history curator the global reach; an ethnographer would ask 'whose "we" wills this?' Only art galleries like the VAG, diffident about disciplinary competencies and anxious about relations with the broader public, would fall for the inept hucksterism of Mau's design.": 8.

37. Re-Think Advertising has worked with the CAG to organize *Buttons*, as well as *Day Tripper* (a program of videos by Vancouver artist Brady Cranfield presented as a drive-through video window).

38. William Wood, "The Insufficiency of the World," *Intertidal: Vancouver Art and Artists*, eds. Dieter Roelstrate and Scott Watson (Antwerp/Vancouver: Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst Antwerpen and The Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, 2005): 66. I am indebted to Wood's astute observations on Vancouver branding.

39. Wood: 76.

40. The current exception is Ian Wallace, who is locally represented by Catriona Jeffries Gallery.

41. Ralph Rugoff, "Baja to Vancouver: The West Coast and Contemporary Art"

in *Baja to Vancouver: The West Coast and Contemporary Art*: 18-19, quoting SiSi Penaloza, "She's the One," *Canadian Art* (Spring 2003): 78-83.

42. Here I am thinking of the work of Geoffrey Farmer, Brian Jungen, and Damian Moppett in particular.

43. Rugoff: 19.

44. It is clear that the artists collected under the Vancouver School umbrella have set a standard for younger artists. But these younger artists, such as Brian Jungen, have also achieved substantial local, national, and international success. Jungen, like a handful of other artists of his generation, represent a newer face of Vancouver art that has generated widespread attention, and will result in new goals for emerging artists wishing to emulate their pattern of success.

45. Jonathan Franzen, *How to be Alone: Essays* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002): 62. Later, in the same essay "Why Bother?" Franzen discusses the agency of the novel. I am indebted to his observations on the role of literature, and by extension the role of visual art, in society. He writes, "What emerges as the belief that unifies us is not that a novel can change anything, but that it can *preserve* something.... novelists are preserving a tradition of precise, expressive language; a habit of looking past surfaces into interiors; maybe an understanding of private experience and public context as distinct but interpenetrating; maybe mystery, maybe manners. Above all, they are preserving a community of readers and writers...": 90.

11

Stuart Blackley
Hank Bull
Clint Burnham
Christine Corlett
Kate Craig
Damon Crain

Gerald Creede
Mari Dumett
Geoffrey Farmer
Deanna Ferguson
Brian Jungen
Andrew Klobucar

BOO



Brian Jungen, cover of *Boo* magazine #11, 1997 (detail)