

Balcone, a non-profit society founded in 2006 and conceived by Justin Muir, acts as collaborator, supporter and sometimes real estate agent for contemporary artists in Vancouver. Balcone does not have a permanent office space nor does it operate in a permanent gallery or studio. Therefore, the organization is flexible in a way that most cannot be. Projects are considered, approved and pursued on a project-by-project basis. Most are site specific in nature and often involve components of performance and participation. The spaces of Balcone are activated by moments and audiences.

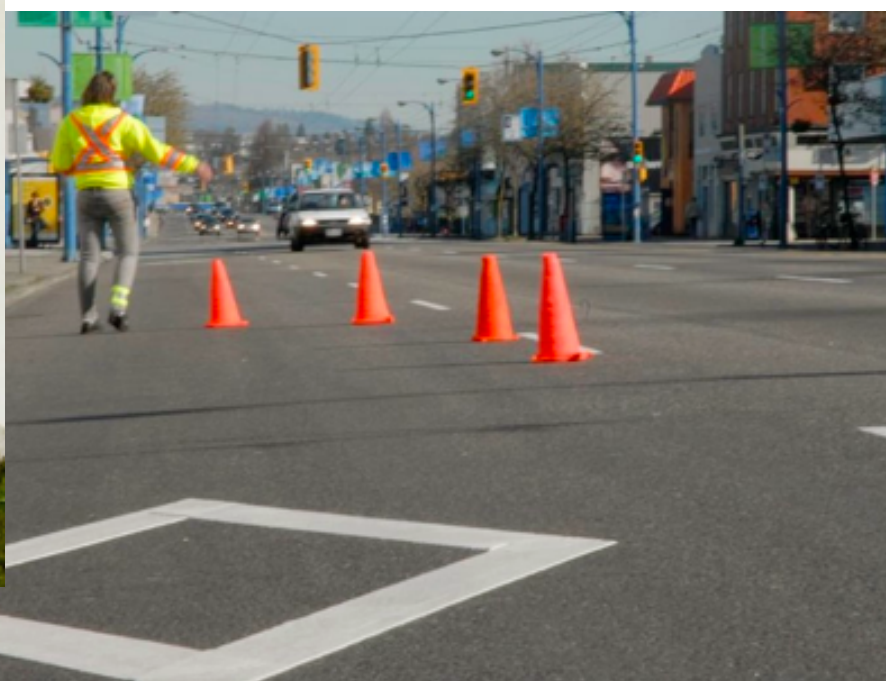
Conceived as an organization that would present contemporary art projects throughout various spaces in Vancouver, Muir became interested in the interplay between participatory and collaborative practices and temporality in his final year of a Fine Arts Degree with Honours at the University of Victoria. For his graduate project he invited several artists to create, build and conceptualize work during a weeklong period in the university's gallery space. The notion of activated space as well as the observance of the process of creation has since found its way into Muir's larger project of Balcone.

Case in point was Heidi Nagtegaal's Redirecting Traffic of 2010. The Emily Carr University grad crocheted four traffic pylons out of neon orange flagging tape and redirected several vehicles on East Hastings Street during the Olympic Games for ten minutes. This was reclamation of public space in moment that lacked privacy and boasted heightened security, drivers became both actor and audience. Those beautiful handcrafted pylons were created at Hammock, an artist residency run by Nagtegaal that is sponsored as an ongoing project by Balcone.

The most recent collaborative project by the organization was Randy Grskovic's show The Age of Info(rmation) held at 2233 Granville Street, the heart of (the commercial) Gallery Row. The space was procured specifically for the show, as it happened to be between tenants. While the series of collage and diorama works occupied the space, so too did people. Lots of them. Grskovic arranged a reading room and invited interested passersby to take some time, relax and converse. An artist talk, a magazine launch and a closing party all shared some space and a little time with Grskovic's pieces.

In 2009, Balcone was granted charitable status, inviting new opportunities for funding. As an arts organization in Vancouver they are navigating new initiatives to find money, either by partnering with already funded projects or collaborating with artists to find/create funding for projects they believe in. And yes, the name is pronounced balcony, "a space that hinges between private and public, interior and exterior, a space from which to view and be viewed". A space, the organization has proven, is much more interesting when it is shared, shaped and supple.

Below: Redirecting Traffic, 2010, performance documentation, photo: Rachel Eden Baumann



Above: RANDY GRSKOVIC THE AGE OF INFO(RMATION): 2010

What Does A Docent Do?

By: Claudia Pedrero

A year and a half ago I began volunteering at the Vancouver Art Gallery (VAG) as a Docent within the gallery's Public Programs department. A Docent is a volunteer who gives educational tours and runs activities to children. At the VAG, Docents are responsible for touring hundreds of kids every week on any of the VAG's frequently changing shows.

Every Docent at the VAG is required to go through four months of intense training, as well as oral and written exams. As a Docent you learn different approaches to facilitating tours, how to translate the curator's vision into a relevant language for different age groups, and how to synthesize material into programs that will excite kids.

One unexpected obstacle I faced was adjusting my language level for really young kids. Imagine trying to explain the concept of abstraction to a group of seven-year-olds without having their eyes glaze over. The stress of going through such a rigorous training has definitely been worth it.

My weekly tours at the VAG have been incredibly inspiring experiences, where I've seen how powerful art can be when used as a vehicle to talk about history, culture and politics. Just a few weeks ago, while touring *Kerry James Marshall*, I had a conversation about civil rights and racism in the United States with a group of 11-year-olds. At *Song Dong: Waste Not*, students frequently relate the collection of 10,000 objects to the things they collect and their own practices of recycling and reusing.

“Imagine trying to explain the concept of abstraction to a group of seven-year-olds without having their eyes glaze over.”

There are small hiccups though, such as when really young ones just can't resist touching the Brian Jungen sculptures. However, being a Docent has been a refreshing way to engage with the art world, partly because children often give hilarious, uninhibited, yet thoughtful responses to the art they encounter.

The networking opportunities are also numerous. The curators and gallery staff often give Docents private tours and lectures about upcoming exhibitions, which are great opportunities to meet people. As a volunteer I have gained a sense of what career options one has at a larger art institution and what it takes to be successful while working in the arts. Many of the current staff started out as volunteers at the VAG, and often job openings don't reach the public because they are filled through personal networks.

The transferable skills I've learned and insight gained about art institutions has helped me land other jobs and make future career plans. Previously, public speaking was a foreign and awkward experience. But the confidence I've gained from giving tours has helped me in ways I hadn't considered including speaking up in class, giving seminar presentations and job interviews.

Even though I don't necessarily see myself working at a large art organization in the future, I have now gained a sense of what working in the arts entails. Considering a career in the arts? I recommend volunteering at the VAG or any other arts-related institution in Vancouver. To volunteer visit their website: http://vanartgallery.bc.ca/get_involved/volunteer.html

Editor's Note

Dear Readers, *artful.* returns this month tackling several issues and concerns dominant in the art world. However, first we must say goodbye to former editor Shoshanna Paul, we wish her well in her future endeavours, and we are happy to have had her as part of the *artful.* team.

In a postmodern context how to keep art relevant and engaging when we are bombarded by images daily is an important question being asked. Is it possible to do this with often limited resources? Britt Gallpen begins to address these questions in her discussion about Balcone, an artist run initiative.

This issue seeks, in part, to answer the question what is art today by looking at alternative art spaces, performance and dance. Also included is a review of "FACES": Works from the permanent collection at the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery as well as an in depth look at being a Docent at the Vancouver Art Gallery.

Ines de Sequera and Nailah King
Editorial Staff for *artful.*



Left: Karen Pitkethly, courtesy Karen Flamenco

Below: Flamenco Singer, photo courtesy Pirouz Ebadypour

Right Above: The Bandidas, courtesy Karen Flamenco

Right Below: Tablao Performance at Kino Café, courtesy Ines



The Art of Flamenco

By: Ines de Sequera

“And one and two and three! Eso es!”

From a means of expression for poor people in Andalucía in the 18th century to its rise in popularity in the 19th and 20th centuries, the dance has come a long way to become what you see today at the Karen Flamenco School in Vancouver. Ms. Pitkethly gives you a chance to decide for yourself whether flamenco is an art with her unique approach.

Students can learn to express themselves through the complex language of flamenco. There are traditional pieces such as Sevillanas, the festive dance from Seville, and Bulerias por Fiesta, the passionate dance from Jerez that hints at sorrow. Every flamenco song and rhythm tells a story and feeling that drives every gaze, turn, step, and line of the dancer’s body. Even the colours worn reflect the emotion of the piece.

“Having a dance school I am constantly coming up with traditional flamenco choreographies for dance classes,” says Karen. “Aside from the traditional dance forms of flamenco, I enjoy stepping outside the box and trying new approaches.” Indeed Karen has stepped outside the box and infused the traditions of flamenco with her own creativity to add new flare to the classic Romeo and Juliet. In her version, the feud is between the bandidas of the Martinez and Castillo families that lead to the tragic romance of Romeo and Julietta.

In the dictionary, art has been defined as the expression or application of human creative skill or imagination, typically in a visual form. Performance art combines the visual with dramatic performance. Every flamenco dancer, singer and musician would agree with me when I say that flamenco is an art. Do you agree? Let the debate begin.



Liz Magor
Fieldwork (Waihusiwa, a Zuni Kyaqimassi), 1988
Silver gelatin print
50.5 x 40.2 cm
Collection of the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, The University of British Columbia
Gift of the artist, 1996
photo: Michael Barrick

This reflection on the various methods of representation further suggests a space for thought on how faces are indicative of or, alternatively, construct our social, economic,

sexual and/or racial identities. With these questions implicit in the display, the viewer is somewhat passively confronted with imagery that requires them to situate themselves in relation to these works.

Considering our increasingly technologic culture, it is interesting to contemplate the changing nature of faces. As first impressions and general interactions transition from in person to on-line—evidenced through mediums such as email, Facebook, Twitter, dating websites, blogging—the actual requirement for ‘face to face’ interactions is becoming increasingly minimal. These relationships can be further complicated through notions of privacy and identity construction. In a way, technologic identities are abstract constructions of our own devising.

If our on-line identities remain evidence of a constructed identity, I question what identity “FACES” attempts to construct for its audience?

MORRIS AND HELEN BELKIN ART GALLERY

A Sea of Faces

By: Y.N.P.

On Friday January 14th, the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery held a successful and well attended opening reception for its new exhibit, “FACES.” Co-curated by Scott Watson and undergraduate and curatorial studies graduate students at UBC, “FACES” includes works selected from both Canadian and international artists.

The show’s curators unearthed the many faces buried in the storage at the Belkin, displaying works from the Belkin’s permanent collection and archives as well as research and photographs loaned by the Museum of Anthropology, the Canadian Museum of Civilization, and the American Museum of Natural History Library.

Entitled “FACES”, the show poses the fundamental question of what constitutes a face? Furthermore, it questions what modes of representation can be understood as facial? Displaying over 90 works, the show reflects upon representations of faces and their relationships to identity politics. More specifically, it focuses on how each “face” establishes a dialogue of its own context and speaks to, with, and in contrast to its surroundings and representative identities.