

JUDY RADUL **World Rehearsal Court** (detail) 2009 Seven-channel video installation, running time 4 h; four servo-controlled video cameras, playback system, monitors, dolly, track, found and built objects, Plexiglas Dimensions variable PHOTO HOWARD URSULIAK

VANCOUVER

MORRIS AND HELEN BELKIN ART GALLERY

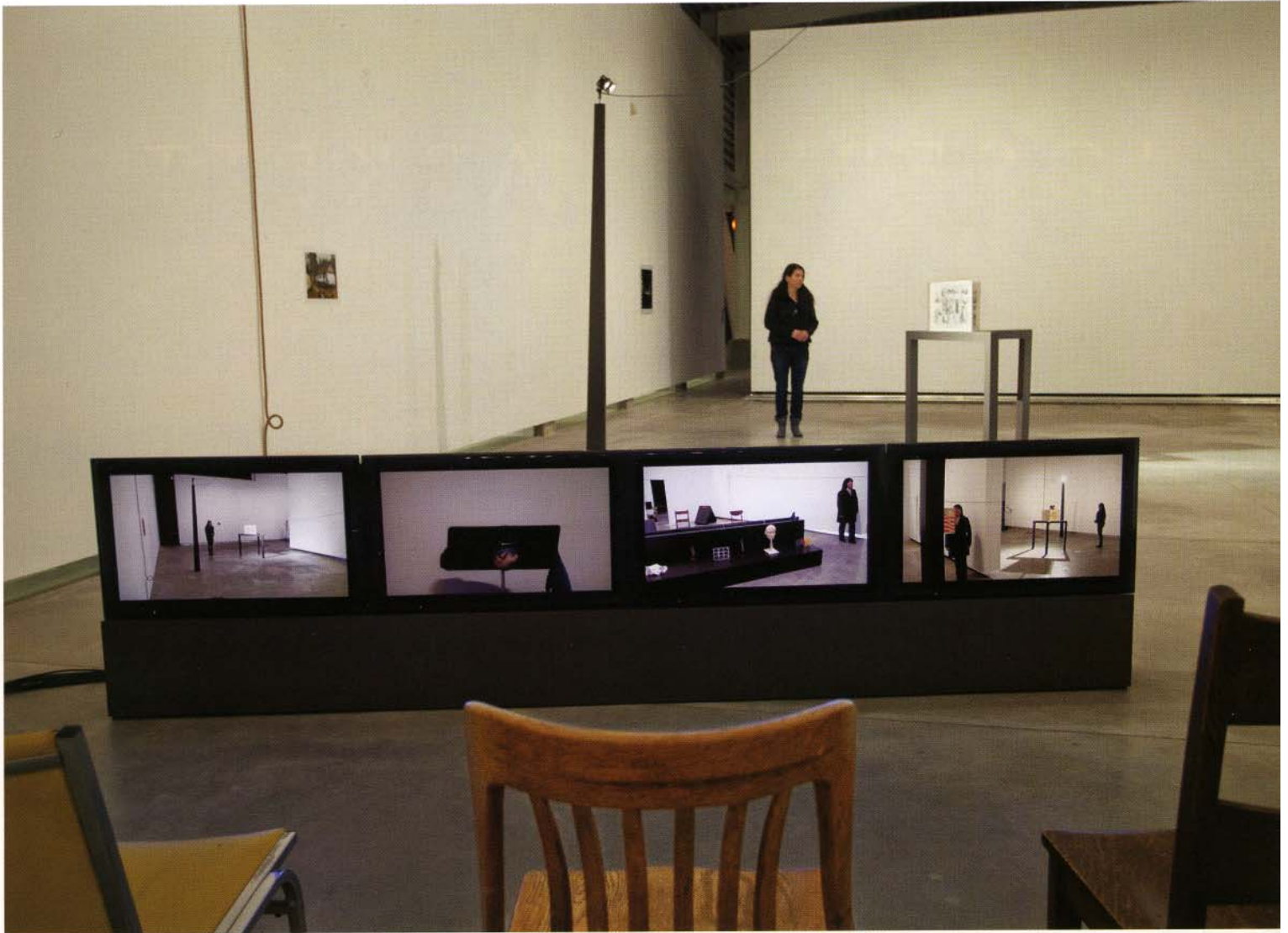
JUDY RADUL

by Aaron Peck

REVIEWS

The work of Judy Radul often troubles the process of how one comes to think of one thing as true and another false. As such, it has often examined notions of—and applied strategies of—artifice. *And So Departed (Again)* (2003) presented five different directors rehearsing an actress for a death scene, for example. Her new work *World Rehearsal Court* (2009) grapples with ideas of testimony and surveillance.

The piece is ambitious, combining a seven-channel video and a multi-room installation. The video is displayed on seven monitors, six of which are mounted in a horizontal row, with the final monitor resting on the floor beneath. The six



mounted monitors show us different views of a six-member tribunal that is investigating the war crimes of the “former President of the 21st Republic” and a “former soldier who pleaded guilty”; the seventh monitor, resting below, presents the witness the tribunal is questioning. The four-hour video is based on trial transcripts of international criminal tribunals held at the World Court (its proper name is the International Criminal Court). In the video all proper names have been changed so as to efface identities, locations and religious affiliation.

The longer one watches, the more evident the drama becomes. The performances are riveting, and the antagonism is heightened by the serial nature of the sessions. Tension builds as we see the frustration experienced by a witness, the irritation of the judge and the boredom of a waiting guard again and again. What becomes clear is that it is not the witness’s testimony that is being judged, but rather his performance of it. Radul self-reflexively exposes the stage set (the video was shot in a school gymnasium) and the crew during portions of the video.

The rooms adjacent to that housing the video piece contain surveillance cameras, three in each room and one mounted on a dolly that moves in and out of two rooms. The footage captured by these cameras is displayed on monitors in the rooms themselves, so visitors can observe themselves

being watched. Each room is scattered with objects: what they are “evidence” of, however, remains ambiguous. The viewer is implicated into the work in a number of ways: for example, the (fictional) courtroom video mimics surveillance footage, and the viewer becomes a witness to the supposed evidence proffered in the installation.

The two parts of the work mirror one another. Walking through the installation, viewers become participants in a theatre of their own making, whereas the performers in the video go through the scripted motions of a court of law, highlighting how performance and technology determine what can be articulated truthfully.

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