

with the school's priest and plays with the young students. The storytelling in the film is mostly wordless and romanticizes her life. Her demeanour, for instance, remains stoic the whole time, much like the familiar stereotype of the unsmiling, stoic Indian. Or, while her husband and small child appear elsewhere in the film, there is her awkward date with a white man, establishing her sexual availability as a polite, Pocahontas-style Indian Princess.

Forty-six years later, framed in a single, fixed colour shot, Seraphine's charm animates her TRC testimonial. She talks about her brothers and sisters, her relationship to her parents, the ways in which residential school dehumanized her, and the emotional toll of learning to survive in that environment. She seems happy as she speaks about the beading she wants to do, and her husband's dedication to berry picking, now intent on maintaining a connection to the practices and traditions she lost when she was separated from her family as a girl. Side by side, the two screens go blank at intervals, sometimes overlapping and other times letting room for one or the other story to unfold. Next to the severe artificiality of the docu-drama, the honesty and the intimacy of Seraphine's story is deeply affecting.

The concurrent solo exhibition at Mercer Union, *Challenge for Change/Société nouvelle: Documents in Participatory Democracy*, provides a context for thinking about the politics of representation in Stewart's piece. Jacqueline Hoang Nguyen curated a selection of documentaries from the National Film Board's *Challenge for Change* program. Recognizing the agency that could be generated through self-representation, the NFB handed filmmaking tools to different struggling communities. Single mothers in urban centres, First Nations like the Mohawks of the St. Regis Reserve, and remote communities like Newfoundland's Fogo Island were all empowered to tell their stories, in their own way. From 1967 to 1980, the documentaries they produced showed in-depth subjective perspectives on poverty, discrimination, inequity and sovereignty.

In Canada, the either/or discourse of assimilation or reservation for First Nations has historically been maintained by very precise ways of representing Indigenous people and cultures. The disjunction in *Seraphine, Seraphine* between the two representations

of Seraphine's residential school experience proves how at odds the perspective of the CBC filmmaker is with the TRC, a process of healing and reconciliation meant to generate an official archive of survivor testimonials. Next to Seraphine's unadorned TRC testimonial, the assimilationist ideology that so casually underpins the docu-drama's creation is blatant. Though it is ostensibly Seraphine's story, its orchestration by white, male director Richard Bocking and a crew of five other men performs a well-intentioned whitewashing of the residential school system. In 1967, Seraphine's image is used as an example of successful Indigenous integration, but, as she shares decades later in her TRC testimonial, this success was at the cost of her childhood and her culture. But even this representation can't be seen as neutral. Though Canada's TRC is paid for by funds from the compensation awarded to the Indian Residential Schools Survivors Society, it is administered by government-appointed commissioners, the same federal government that continues to uphold the Indian Act legislation that once mandated attendance at residential schools.

In *Seraphine, Seraphine*, Stewart enacts the kind of self-representation sought by *Challenge for Change*, albeit in a more deeply personal way. Assimilationist ideology continues to play a key role in the mechanisms of colonialism and in this work intimate moments of one family's personal history shed light on some of the problems with our nation-building project as a whole. Reclaiming these archival documents from the context of their creation, a made-for-TV documentary (CBC) and an inquiry into residential schools (TRC), and showing them together, Stewart destabilizes the authority they might have if watched alone. The edited conversation between past and present representations makes clear the ideological parameters and production imperatives that structured how Seraphine was allowed to share her experience. Stewart's formal strategies bring a new sovereignty to her mother's story, and in this way she accomplishes the difficult work of creating a decolonial aesthetic.

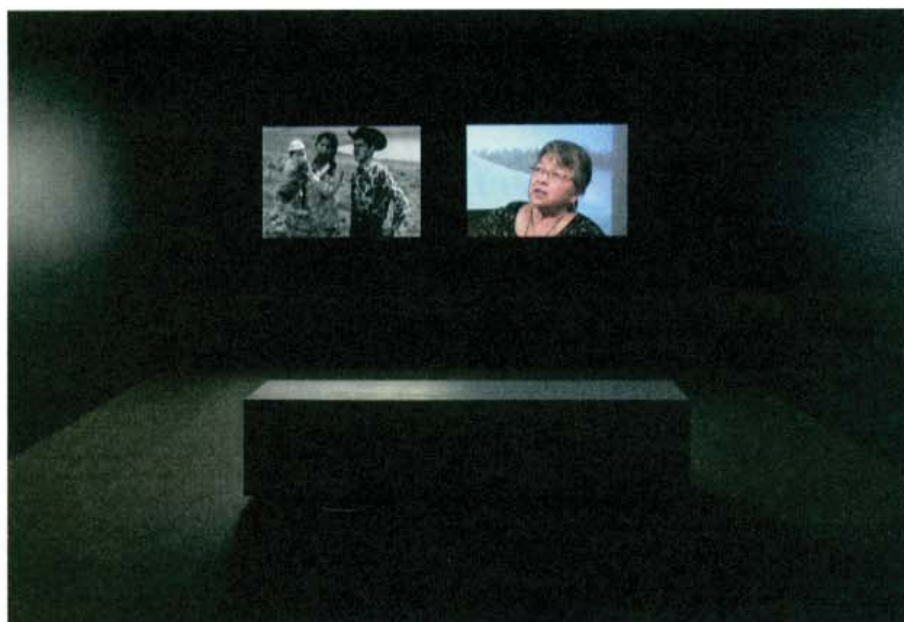
Yaniya Lee is a writer and interviewer based in Toronto.

#### 4. BOTH A CONDENSATION AND FRAYING OF THOUGHT

Raymond Boisjoly

Tiziana La Melia's review of Amy Lam's review of the review that came before her, and by extension, perhaps the larger process of the project of *Rearviews* itself, begins with a chunk of italicized text with very particular line breaks, calling attention to its literary character as poetry and, by contrast, to the review as a literary genre. What if the review took as its task the production of an experience akin to that produced by the work being discussed? La Melia's focus moves between the review being reviewed and the context of her own review. She provides a summary of points that are intensified by brief statements following her longer considerations: "Irked, no doubt," "Seeking polemic," "I'm not sure." These brief statements suggest both a condensation and fraying of thought. *Rearviews*, a review of a review

Krista Belle Stewart,  
*Seraphine: Her Own Story*,  
2014, digital two channel  
video, 38:57 min.  
PHOTO: TONI HAFKENSCHIED;  
IMAGE COURTESY OF THE ARTIST  
AND MERCER UNION, TORONTO





**Krista Buecking:**  
**MATTERS OF FACT**  
 Susan Hobbs Gallery, Toronto  
 Feb 26—April 4, 2015  
 By Karina Irvine

The clock has come to orchestrate the passage of the day as we conduct our work and leisure, and complete our errands according to its measures of duration. It can prompt a feeling of time dragging on or moving too fast, reminding us of what has already been done or still needs to be accomplished. In Krista Buecking's exhibition at Susan Hobbs Gallery in Toronto, *MATTERS OF FACT*, the minimalist design of a clock overhead, titled *MATTERS OF FACT (all things being equal)*, creates structure as one spends time deciphering the colours and arrangement of the geometric graphs on display. The uppercase letters in the title assert authority, resounding an element of truth, though the artist applies a playful and aesthetic pursuit to challenge these assumptions. The bracketed title for the clock, (all things being equal), suggests equality in the system of measurement broken into segments by the clock. However, this does not compensate for how one operates within this timeframe. The inequality of evaluating labour is a theme here that Buecking makes apparent in her images. The artist's approach of using symbolic languages also brings attention to the objective and abstract systems that work to describe and simplify many aspects of reality.

The first image, *MATTERS OF FACT (codified form A)*, depicts the jagged ascent and then steeper descent of a yellow line over a soft, misty, ultramarine gradient. With a simple mark, associations of both finance and the sublime are connoted with a minimalist depiction of a pointed mountain peak, which also resembles a graph signifying capital accumulation. One can assume that the various diagrams painted on Plexiglas throughout the first floor of the exhibition relay information about progress or decline in the neoliberal system, while their shapes cast shadows on the gradient beneath.

A soundtrack of self-help dialogues, teen melodramas and infomercial catchphrases can be heard throughout the lower level of the gallery. If one considers the title of the exhibition while listening, they might ask, what could be the matter? As Bruno Latour points out, matters of fact have depleted in meaning and value, whereas matters of concern have become more apt in addressing whatever the issues are at hand. We can no longer think of objects as pure matters of fact since they are, as Latour describes it, far more "variegated, uncertain, complicated, far reaching, heterogeneous, risky, historical, local, material and networky" than we credit them as being. Buecking's work seems to echo this sentiment. Matters of fact have increasingly become disputable and abstract. As such, the dialogue and canned music are as humorous as they are comforting, addressing a more subjective engagement that is associated more appropriately perhaps with matters of concern. The title itself also implies that there is a direct relationship with matter. Buecking has stated that "the longing, effort and sacrifice that separate us from objects are also supposed to lead us towards them." The symbolic systems developed by modernist abstraction, early education programs and economic representations referred to here are semiotic systems that attempt to reveal an understanding of material things. Whether they are effective or not, Buecking highlights both a discrepancy and curiosity associated with these languages.

Viewing these images with a clock looming over the gallery space means the familiar aphorism "time is money" is hard to dismiss. Time is another abstraction, and dwelling on the fact that everything involves or takes time is unavoidable within this exhibition. It is made visible as viewers are encouraged to consider aspects of labour and value as they take their time contemplating the works on display. The steady and slow pace of contemplation is met with the (puritan) anxieties of whether one's time was worthwhile or well spent. The gradients themselves are made by hand with pencil crayon, laboriously mimicking that which is seen as a fill-in for context on computer screens. In contrast to the simplified graphs and symbols painted on the Plexiglas, Buecking's flawless transition of colours can easily be read as computer-

privileged position, allowing for other actions to be emphasized, such as the ostensibly real rather than feigned drama of the internal conflicts concerning the various film crews' questioning of Greaves' production method. The impact of Greaves' film, and perhaps Rearviews itself, is that the complete and

tured the actors rehearsing a scripted scene of relationship strife in Central Park, the second crew shot the first crew and the third documented anything on the periphery that seemed relevant to the story and larger film, mostly cops it seems. The complex dynamic of this film denies the scripted narrative a

of a review of a review of... an exhibition? This is a writing exercise akin to William Greaves' 1966 film *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Take One*, wherein Greaves hired three film crews to document the varying levels of reality offered by the process of narrative filmmaking. The first film crew cap-

Krista Buecking, *MATTERS OF FACT (equivalent forms, manipulatives)*, 2015, MDF, wood, presentation pad and easel, tropical standard foliage, 152.5 x 183 x 183 cm  
 PHOTO: TONI HAFKENSCHIED; IMAGE COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND SUSAN HOBBS GALLERY, TORONTO





generated, raising questions about the value of the effort required to make these works by hand. Therefore, these images create a metaphor for labour, where the effort and time that creating things takes is increasingly devalued or overlooked. Her series of hand-coloured pastel gradients creates pause through subtlety, bringing attention to this gap between labour, time and value.

On the upper level at Susan Hobbs Gallery, a collection of geometric shapes and a flip chart are displayed on a raised white platform (*equivalent forms, manipulatives*), a stage with large ferns as its backdrop. The ferns themselves perhaps allude to the office appeal of purchasing plants to represent capital growth. Growth in itself is an abstract concept, insinuating an escalation of linear progression and that there is room for expansion. Curiously, Parliament Hill's plants were put on the auction block last year due to budget cuts affecting their hydration. These ferns are emblematic of those seen in offices and businesses, providing what little green can be seen amongst cubicles or on desks. Those auctioned off as a result of budgeting provide an example of Buecking's critique of the abstract values and symbolic language used in today's corporate society, exposing the somewhat comical and misguided stress placed on emblems that signify progress. Buecking presents *MATTERS OF FACT* as elusive, surrounded by systems that break down information, meditating on the semiotic and material while considering the discrepancies in value and false ideals of progress. An overarching question asks, "how do we grasp objects through design? What is the aesthetic and symbolic reality we find ourselves in, and what does it really mean?"

Karina Irvine is an emerging curator and freelance writer.

#### Endnote

- 1 Bruno Latour, "From Realpolitik to Dingpolitik: or How to Make Things Public," in *Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy*, eds. Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2005) p. 21.

immediate access to the primary materials that inaugurated the process itself is impossible because the frame may always be widened, and the distance from the action becomes irreducible so that the work is denied any capacity for transparency and simply seeks another means to call attention to itself or its premise.

## TEMPERAMENTAL

Doris McCarthy Gallery, Toronto  
Jan 5—Feb 14, 2015  
by Ben Portis

*TEMPERAMENTAL* had a bubbling, troubling carnival appeal. Its zones intersected like Venn diagrams around which spectators roamed, related and located the artworks' changing valences in a variety of inclusive/exclusive sets. Self and social linked in initiation; solace and signal in display; silence and celebration in dance; present and past in nostalgia.

*TEMPERAMENTAL* fully came to life during its opening and ongoing public programs. Without a crowd, though, the empty gallery maintained a standby readiness with its video automata and latent, looming icons. Behavioural flux and emotional flutter in alternating phases were only the reactive manifestations of curator Erin Silver's aptly titled exhibition; its recurring counterpoints were deftly declarative, a queered flick of the wrist, flash of the brow or flip of the locks.

*Ten Hair posters* (2012–ongoing) by Mark Clintberg lined the showcase outside the gallery like so many hustlers. Each reproduced a cheap, faded, monotone barbershop head shot, an outmoded cut bobbing atop a chiselled yet vulnerable face. Then just inside the vestibule, just before the threshold to hubbub and hoopla, a faintly echoing forlornness, Clintberg's *Quiet Disco* (2013), an LP recording of a dance party, is heard ruefully through walls as from a place one is excluded. If you even noticed it (as any actual activity nearby neutralized its muffled audibility), you might assume an unwitting complicity, lift the needle and replay the soundtrack of ostracism.

Ironically, given Clintberg's own history of creating empty, waiting stages, *Quiet Disco* looked sidelong through a glass wall into a pristine, conch-pink theatre behind the shit-spangled curtain of Hazel Meyer's *diarrhea* (2014). That work's proscenium faced into the gallery and the drapes glided apart at the flick of a whip. To close yourself within *diarrhea* was to inhabit an incubatory sanctum. No one, to my knowledge, put on an impromptu performance. However a parallel talent show, *Boy Band Audition* (2013)—almost exactly as billed, just not limited to boys—created and hosted by Alexandro Segade and Mateo Segade, was one of the participatory events that took *TEMPERAMENTAL* into the exponential dimensions of its concept.

Across from Meyer's curtain were 12 panels from Will Munro's *Mirror* series (2005). Each was emblazoned with a pink logo, copied or adapted from the golden era of punk discotheques, from late-'70s Manhattan (The Mudd Club) to 2000s Toronto (Vaseline), the latter rendered à la New York Dolls, a tube of oil paint replacing the lipstick. The attitude was simultaneously antechamber, dance floor and bathroom, another oddly inert, codified party that offered grim relief to the pained and conflicted expressions that lay beyond.

Elizabeth Price's *The Woolworths Choir of 1979* (2012) was given a cinematic treatment on par with its spooky complexity. The piece is a narrative cycle in three chapters: (i) "The Auditorium" illustrating ecclesiastical

they are recording: "it doesn't really make any difference at this point whether Bill's direction is good or bad, Bill's direction has brought us here together to talk, compelled us even to be interested that way." Set

as a model for excessive use of framing devices. I'm watching it right now, at the moment of writing. In the film, the discussions of the crew about the absent director are more intense than the dramatic scenes

thankful to Raymond Boisjoly for pointing towards *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm – Take One* (1968), a film that could be described as a backstage drama, a predecessor to reality TV, or, as Raymond suggests,

Backstage dramas happen to be my favourite movie genre, and I'm

5. A PREDECESSOR TO REALITY TV  
Oliver Husain