



Sound of Art, a project by the AGO Youth Council & Nobuo Kubota, 2008, sound art & installation. Working with one of Canada's great sound artists, the group explored intergenerational exchange and perception/our senses

Doing Horizontal Work in Vertical Structures

Hannah Jickling and **Helen Reed**
in conversation with

**Loree Lawrence, Syrus Marcus Ware,
and Pamela Matharu**

HANNAH JICKLING experiments with the possibilities of form, participation and meaning-making across disciplines and publics. Her projects often take shape as site-specific sculptures, public installations, events, exchanges, photographs, multiples, printed matter and other ephemera. Atypical forms of distribution, entrepreneurial scheming and audience-seeking are important strategies for supporting and disseminating her work. Hannah has recently completed artist residencies at Outdoor School (Multnomah Education Service District), The Pedagogical Impulse (University of Toronto), Becoming Pedagogical (University of British Columbia) and the Raumars Artist-in-Residence Programme (Rauma, Finland). Her work is held in private collections across North America and can be tasted in the form of sourdough pancakes, an ongoing work hosted at Bubby's in Manhattan. She holds a BFA from the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design and an MFA from Portland State University. She frequently collaborates with Helen Reed.

HELEN REED works with specific groups of people such as Twin Peaks fans, lesbian separatists, and high school art teacher candidates. In each project, collaboration is a working process from which the artwork emerges. Reed favors collaborators that reflect her interest in participatory culture, affinity groups, and fantasy-based subcultures. Her projects take vernacular form such as television shows, publications, postcards and other forms of easily transmittable and dispersed media, so as to circulate back into the communities from which they are generated.

Reed has exhibited work at Prefix Institute for Contemporary Art (Toronto), apexart (New York), Smack Mellon (New York), Portland Art Museum, Seattle Art Museum and La Centrale Galerie Powerhouse (Montréal). She holds a BFA from the Emily Carr University of Art and Design (Vancouver), an MFA in Art and Social Practice from Portland State University.

HANNAH JICKLING: Helen and I wanted to get the three of you together because we all work using similar frameworks in the city of Toronto. We have been thinking about the three of you as points of reference, over the past year during our residency projects, and we have been lucky enough to have had the opportunity to discuss these projects with you. You are all artists, you all work with youth, and you all work for major public institutions. We thought that getting all five of us in a room for a conversation could be fruitful, particularly in light of recent conversations we have had about redefining community arts practices. Perhaps we could begin with a round of introductions—your names, your art practice and significant projects, and your institutional affiliations.

SYRUS MARCUS WARE: My name is Syrus Marcus Ware, and I'm an artist, and I primarily work with painting, mixed media and performance art. I'm a parent and that seems like more and more of an exciting project too. I have worked at the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO) for 10 years running all of the youth programming. I also work doing community research related to HIV, prisons, and black/trans queer communities.

LOREE LAWRENCE: I'm Loree Lawrence. I am currently the Community and Multi-disciplinary Arts Officer at the Ontario Arts Council (OAC). Before that I worked for numerous years, perhaps 20, doing collaborative theatre development with street-involved youth. During that time, I was the artistic director at a program called KYTES (Kensington Youth Theatre Employment Services). Until 2003, KYTES operated as a satellite program of OASIS, a Toronto District School Board (TDSB) alternative secondary school. It was a very cool project; one of the best models of education I have ever participated in. My interest has always been in working in informal educational settings and outside of institutions, thus one of my current focuses, in my job at the OAC, is to facilitate and develop community-engaged practices in areas outside of Toronto.

PAMILA MATHARU: I'm Pamila Matharu. I'm a practising artist and a teaching artist. I teach at SEED Alternative School, in the TDSB. Established in 1968, SEED was the first publicly funded alternative school in Canada and we are based on the Summerhill School model. SEED was the first school to introduce catalyst models into education, where artists were invited to come teach at night, in the summer, or on weekends. And not just artists, but scientists and lawyers and philosophers too. Whatever young people wanted to learn in those pre-internet days, the teacher would find a catalyst and learning would be facilitated by these professionals. I'm just starting my third year at SEED and I

LOREE LAWRENCE is the Community and Multidisciplinary Arts Officer at the Ontario Arts Council and a co-active coach for organizations and individuals. Prior to joining the OAC, Lawrence worked as a consultant, co-created theatre performances, media arts projects, installations, arts-based research projects with communities in Toronto and Vancouver, and founded Red Wagon Collective, a community-engaged arts initiative that is active in the Junction neighbourhood.

Lawrence's current preoccupation is spreading the art of collaboration and community-engaged practices across the province through whatever means possible and with some success.

PAMILA MATHARU is a visual artist, teaching artist, and cultural producer. Her practice is rooted in the 'other' experience -- from the 'margins to the center' by intersecting critical pedagogy and contemporary art. For the past 19 years, Matharu has worked in Toronto's diverse visual arts community. In 2003, she co-founded and co-curated with artist Christina Zeidler, Come Up To My Room: Gladstone Hotel's Alternative Design Event. As a teaching-artist, she collaborates with youth artists and teaches secondary school level Visual and Media Arts, and Social Sciences in the Toronto District School Board. She holds a BFA in Visual Arts and B.Ed in Fine Arts Education, both from York University, Toronto.

SYRUS MARCUS WARE is a visual artist, community activist, researcher, youth-advocate and educator. He is the Program Coordinator of the AGO Youth Program, Art Gallery of Ontario. Ware's work explores the spaces between and around identities, acting as provocations to our understandings of gender, sexuality and race. His paintings, installation, and performance work has been exhibited at the Art Gallery of York University (AGYU), Gladstone Hotel, A Space Gallery, Harbourfront Centre, and SPIN Gallery and has been published in FUSE Magazine, The Globe and Mail, THIS Magazine, and Blackness and Sexualities. Ware's publications include: co-editing an issue of the Journal of Museum Education entitled "Building Diversity in Museums;" "Going Boldly Where Few Men Have Gone Before: One Trans Man's Experience of Fertility Clinics;" "How Disability Studies Stays White and What Kind of White it Stays;" and a forthcoming chapter with Zack Marshall about disability, Deaf culture and trans identities.

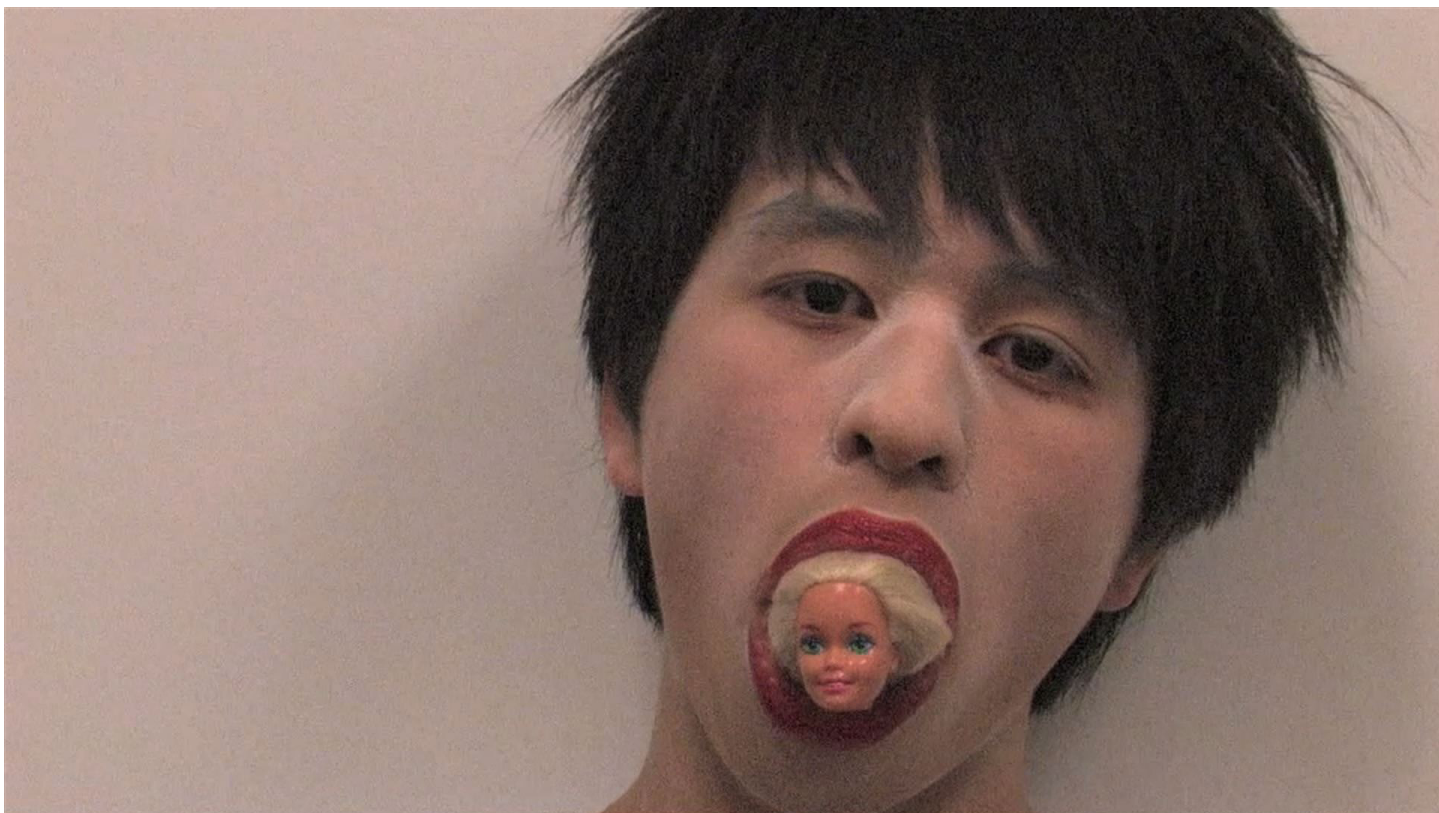
was brought in to revise and reshape the visual arts program. I don't try to separate my artist identity and my teaching artist identity, but rather my artistic practice informs what I am doing at SEED. Prior to SEED I did a lot of installation-based work, photo-based work, and a lot of curatorial projects such as TAAFI (Toronto Alternative Art Fair International) and "Come Up to My Room" at the Gladstone Hotel in Toronto.

HELEN REED: Loree, something that we've been interested in are your efforts to redefine community arts practice and to expand the term community arts. Community arts comes loaded with all kinds of associations—such as mural painting, mosaics, community gardens—and these kinds of art practices have typically been under valued in the art world. We have always been reluctant to have any kind of affiliation with community arts, as it is generally associated with artwork that does not seek an audience beyond the community in which it was generated. It's important for us to create work that can have relevance in multiple contexts. There are so many examples of process-based artworks that have the ability to transmit beyond the 'event.' Can you talk about how you perceive the stigma of community arts and also what kind of potential you think the term holds?

LL: Tracing back my own history, as a practising theatre artist, I involved the community in the work that I did. And at that time, in the mid 80s, we referred to ourselves as 'popular theatre artists.' All of a sudden, in the 90s the term 'community arts' emerged to describe the work of artists of all disciplines who were co-creating art with people who didn't identify as artists. It was important at the time because the practice of moving beyond the arts world to engage with other people needed an identity and it also needed a way to be funded in the art world. OAC played a pretty key role in earning a place for engaged arts practice by establishing the funding program Artists in the Community/Workplace in 1998.

In my role at the OAC I'm interested in reframing the definitions of community arts practice and the assumptions that accompany them, and move toward creating more open notions of what the practice embodies. In my mind there should be no discernible aesthetics to community arts practice if the work is truly co-created. You know, colours and shapes and all sorts of images come to mind in reference to community arts when there is absolutely no basis for that, other than the fact that a particular group of artists have dominated the field. However, that is changing now with a new generation of people interested in doing similar work. For example, I have proposed to rework the OAC's Artist in the Community/Workplace program to identify the core principles of community-engaged practice. Furthermore the OAC needs to be more responsive to the myriad ways artists work outside of the conventional art world and its associated institutions. For example, artists might be using a community arts model, but don't identify as community artists, or they don't know what community arts is, and therefore expanded terms and definitions are needed. There are a lot of misconceptions about community arts that I hope to address in my position at the OAC.

PM: Can I just make a quick comment to that? Because I wonder why it is that what I do with youth collaborators, even before I got into teaching, was misrepresented as 'community arts?' I use the term



FEAR, a project by the AGO Youth Council & Peter Kingstone, 2010, movie still.

'misrepresented' because when artists work with non-artists to create a work of art (and we see this a lot now), their work is understood as contemporary art, but when an artist of colour works with young people, it is typically labeled 'community art.' Judith Thompson is an award winning Canadian playwright, who often works with non-professional actors. On Kawara is a Japanese-American artist, known for his date painting series entitled "Today." In 1997 he installed seven pieces from the series in kindergarten classrooms around the world as a social experiment project, which he called "Pure Consciousness." Their works circulate as contemporary art, while my practice has often been misrepresented as community art.

LL: And there is the hierarchy within the art world around what is legitimate art. Currently community arts are not considered to be a legitimate form of contemporary art.

SMW: It's about principles of working. When the AGO was undergoing a renovation to create the Weston Family Learning Centre, one of the issues, for those of us in the education department, was what to call our community gallery space. Overall we were on board with the idea of a 'community' gallery. However, initially the staff person who came on to do the programming in that space was concerned about the term. She had a really terrific vision and great ideas, but she was caught up in what it meant to call a space a 'community' gallery. She wanted to take the word community out of the title, because having the word community in front of the gallery would possibly conjure up

images of spray paint and macaroni; a certain kind of aesthetic. There were many of us there who really fought for the word to be included, arguing for its importance. We felt that using the term was quite significant. In a large institution that has maybe been perceived as being an elite art space, maybe even perceived as unwelcoming to diverse and non-art communities over its long history, having a space called a 'community gallery' helps to make our walls permeable and situates the institution as being in/part of the community—maybe even an essential part of it.

LL: We are seeing the need within institutions to expand, increase and diversify their revenue base. To do this, institutions need to become more open to the public. At the same time there is a growing expectation that because the institutions are publically funded, the public should have greater access to these institutions. Currently the push within institutions for public engagement is driven by getting as many people in the door by programming what is popular rather than what is both compelling and complex.

SMW: I always thought that my role at the AGO was to make some change and to try to use the physical space and the resources there to support some amazing youth-based community projects. However, when the institution makes a decision to support initiatives based on particular priorities, but those priorities are positioned within a rhetoric of consumption, which often reinforces dominant stereotypes and norms, it can be difficult to navigate the institutional authority with community initiatives and relationships. So what does it mean for those of us doing work within the institution that is geared to non-normative forms of representation, such as partnering with the Reel Asian Film Festival, inviting and paying artists to create stop animation films with youth, or collaborating with the Deaf Film Festival? It is challenging when the institution continues to reproduce educational and promotional materials that particular communities find problematic and which undermine the work that I, and others, do. It's one of the tensions of working with diverse communities from within the institution.

HR: So how do you navigate institutions, while working from within one that may not reflect your ideals? How do you work with them and try to change them from the inside?

LL: In many ways I think I've changed OAC more than it's changed me. I never thought that was possible. I've brought my priorities and values with me and this is what has made a difference in the culture and priorities of the institution. These days I think of myself as a relational artist, partnering with the province of Ontario to produce and disseminate community-engaged practice beyond Toronto.

SMW: That's true, and I would say that the AGO is very different from when I started working there. For example, the Youth Council was made up of mostly kids from private school; there was not a lot of representation outside of that. I worked hard to change these demographics and to open up the program for youth going through transitions and who may not be in school at all. A lot of people in the current youth program have dropped out of school, some are in school, and all have vastly different cultural and community experiences. These major differences are what



The Mural Project, a project by the AGO Youth Council & Francesca Nocera, 2008, aerosol art

make our project more responsive and meaningful to the youths' lives, and not simply an institutional program created to attract diverse audiences.

PM: Historically SEED was also a very white space, very upper to middle class. Today there are a number of street youth at the school. These students previously didn't have access to this form of education.

SMW: I also think the category of youth is arbitrary because the meaning of the term youth changes with each organization that works with youth. Some organizations say youth starts at age 13, some say 15. Some say it ends at 19 and others at 29. So it's clearly not an essential category. It is also a contemporary way of looking at age, which is not fixed or stable. If these identity categories are blurred then it is possible to imagine more approaches to working with youth, more possibilities for them. 15 years ago the term 'youth' was rarely used. People often used 'teen.' So instead of 'youth,' maybe I'll say I work with people who are going through a time of transition in their life. Transitioning from not being able to make a lot of choices to being able to make more choices.

In any art project that you are doing, in any kind of creative endeavour, your life is also happening. In one of our programs for individuals in an age of transition, one of our participants has only been in Canada for two months. He came here as a refugee claimant and had to leave his family of origin and home country because his family found out that he was gay. So he jammed whatever he could into a bag and was on a plane at 6 am. So of course I spend maybe another hour and half of my day talking to him because he doesn't know anyone here. It's part of the work I do. For some reason we have developed a relationship where he feels like he can talk to me about some of the struggles. People don't see what it means to do work with particular communities; they don't see the additional component that is totally part of the work.

LL: When we talk about vulnerable populations I think what we are talking about are people who are in transitional times in their lives. Often, people involved in community-engaged projects are extending themselves beyond the assumptions and expectations they have of themselves for a variety of reasons. There is an association of community arts with personal transformation. It doesn't mean the art is therapy but we do acknowledge all of the tensions and conflicts surrounding change in the process of art making.

HJ: And I think to bring it back to the idea of negotiating institutions, for all of their evils, what I hear each of you saying is that you are able to have these kinds of relationships because you are bringing your practice into the institution.

LL: Doing horizontal work in vertical structures.

HJ: The institution enables something that wouldn't happen outside of the institution.

HR: Do you think that queer politics inform the way that you inhabit the institution?

SMW: The activism that I've been involved with has always informed my art practice and has been very much rooted in trying to work towards a world where we all get the right to self-determination. And I think my desire to do that work comes from the fact that as a racialized queer and trans person I didn't feel the right to self-determination. So that informed my desire to make some change in the world.

PM: As an artist I struggle with questions like: Am I a queer artist? Am I a South Asian artist? Am I just working through feminist politics? What am I? I think I'm all the above but it is about negotiating these identities. They are all interrelated to me. My practice is connected to race; it is also connected to class. I'm constantly working through these intersectionalities inside and outside of the education system, as both an artist and as a teacher. It's all these selves that are continually struggling with a politics that exists on a day-to-day basis. I'd say I've always been part of the margins and I work from the margins. I use the qualities of grassroots activism in the classroom. So you want to make a sound production, what tools do you have? Just a cell phone? But it has a recorder on it! So just trying to show students how to work within their means with whatever they have.



Helping Young People Excel (H.Y.P.E) was a collaboration between the AGO Youth Council and THEM.ca. The festival celebrated hip hop as an art form, and paved the way for groups like Manifesto and UNITY



Pride Celebrations 2011, Dancers III Nana performing at the AGO

LL: Coming from the margins and being in schooling situations where perhaps we weren't being served ourselves, we try to address those gaps in the ways that we work with other people.

SMW: And that is also parenting. I just saw this interview with "Far From the Tree" author, Andrew Solomon. He is a queer dad, and he has a gigantic family; there are many different people who had roles in raising his children. You can parent in a different way than how your parents parented, but then his caution was: are you parenting the way that would have been best for you as a child? The way you wish you had been parented? But is this how your child wants/needs to be parented? So then his question was: "how do you parent the person who is in front of you?" This relates to my work with youth, where I have to consider: "is this program the best fit/program for the youth who are in front of me?" And how do I make those evaluations? Who gets to decide what is the best fit?

The Youth Council decides what projects they want to do. I can give them information about what artists are out there and then they can



Screen This, a silk screen and activism workshop by Kenji Tokawa for the AGO's Free After Three program, 2009

ShiftChange, a project by the AGO Youth Council and Dan Bergeron, 2008, Street Art. The project explored transformation and gender and celebrated the re-listing of SRS under OHIP after a 10 year fight by trans communities. 2 shots are : prepping paste-up panels; installation of paste-ups on front of AGO



pick which artist they want to work with and how they want to work together. If we didn't do it that way, they wouldn't come. If you are not going to be interested or engaged with the project why would you go? You could be going swimming or doing something else. To keep engaging the participants and to make projects that are reflexive of and rooted in youth communities, our projects require that the youth direct them. The Youth Council has ownership from the planning to the outcome or else they wouldn't want to come.

HJ: So we are talking about reparative work, about creating experiences for other people that might have been absent or missing in our own experience coming to be artists? The idea of reparative work implies that art has an obligation to 'do good,' or to create some kind of positive social change. Syrus, I'm interested in what you said about being a parent: making assumptions about what you think is best for

that other person based on your own experience. And that leads into a conversation about performing social heroics, around the assumption that art is transformative, and that art can save people. Can each of you offer thoughts about what could possibly be misdirected about these concepts?

LL: Community arts are deeply inscribed with this reparative work. It was very much part of the way that KYTES got funded, and the way that community artists and organizations continue to get funded to this day: for reparative work, to help people to become employable, to prevent crime, do harm reduction, etcetera.

One of the reasons I wanted to do my Masters degree was because I was so tired of the overuse of language like 'empowerment' to describe what we were doing. I really wanted to go back to the youth that I had worked with 6 or 7 years ago, to talk about what the hell we were doing. How we evaluate what we are doing and measure the success of these kinds of programs is fundamental. You certainly can't measure empowerment; that's a completely false premise for doing this kind of work, which is much more nuanced.

HR: I'm interested in the reflections that the KYTES participants had about the project. You mentioned to us that the reflections were nothing like you imagined they would be: that they remembered things like the quality of light in the room, things that are not quantifiable, but were very meaningful to them. So it goes back to a question of necessary evils: how does this work get funded? How can you convince people to fund art programs with immeasurable outcomes?

LL: Well the program lost its funding. We were known for being a pretty radical crew; we were organizing a program that ran 5 days a week for 4 months, for 16-24 year old street-youth. It kept us on our feet literally trying to keep the doors open and deliver process-oriented programming with results oriented funding. We did everything we could including enlist politicians like Jack Layton and Olivia Chow who were huge supporters, but the relationship was problematic and eventually we, including the youth, lost out.

SMW: That's very interesting, because if you try to look up Regent Park Focus in the phone book, it's Regent Park Drugs Prevention Arts Program or something like that, and it had to be named accordingly so that they could access these kinds of grants. In fact they are a youth video/media arts program that I'm sure indirectly promotes drug prevention, but that is not their main focus. Rather than this deficit model, their goal is to empower youth as cultural producers, teaching them skills related to media arts. Certainly a lot of the partners that I work with get a lot of funding that's either HIV prevention funding or some sort of project that somehow teaches people about HIV. The Griffin Centre gets HIV and newcomer settlement funding and does great art programming with youth. So many programs have to tailor or tweak their program focus to fit funding that is available. And it is very interesting when these certain pots of funding come up because so many places are on a shoestring budget and often have to repackage what they are doing, even if they don't intend it to be that way. And the way the program appears on paper can really can effect it in practice.



The Living Room Project, a project of the AGO Youth Council & Swintak, 2005, installation & performance. The group partnered with other youth in the city and formed "The Upholstery Militia". Image is of their ID badges for performance as 'certified outdoor upholstery specialists'



Underground Sasquatch Protection Network (USPN), a project of the AGO YC and Rebeka Tabobondung & John Hupfield, 2010, video.

LL: It's important to involve all of the stakeholders in conversations about the impact of the work. The participants in the program need to be at the table as stakeholders, talking to the funders about what is going on and why the program is important.

HJ: Helen and I struggle with the stigma of community arts but then we don't want to be understood as teaching artists either. We want to collaborate with youth. In addition, we think about what it means to enable particular learning experiences for the people we collaborate with, and simultaneously question the sense of authorship, that we as artists desire.

SMW: I haven't resolved the issue of how to initiate collaboration and yet still have an authorship role within the project. How do you honour the youth you work with but also understand the project as your own art practice? It's a very familiar tension in activist practice too, it's very complicated. Naturally, different personalities are there and people have different skill sets and there are people who are like, "no I'm actually going to make sure that this project gets finished."

HJ: I have joined collaborative projects because there is an amazing leader who I wanted to learn from. It is very complicated when we consider how authority or expertise plays a role in such collective situations. Perhaps what we need to think about are the tensions between authorship and collaboration, and that at the same time it is really problematic to make assumptions about what is transformative.

LL: If you are not being responsive and allowing collaborators to come forward and be part of the design then that becomes problematic for everyone.

SMW: It's tricky because there is a power dynamic. Even when you are trying for there not to be, there is. I do a lot of contracts for artists to come in short term, and it's something like, "You have to work with the participants in a collaborative way and make it through consensus decision-making, and you have to make sure the project is finished and is beautiful." Because at the end of the day the institution needs there to be an outcome, and that responsibility has to fall on someone. So let's say that there is a project, and there are all these tangents, and it is a really amazing experience, but time is running out, and there are two weeks left: it is the artist who is going to have to be doing the 24-hour days to make sure the project finishes. Even when you are doing a collaboration, someone is going to have to finish the project. It's less than ideal.

LL: And what is finished? Why can't it be a document of the process?

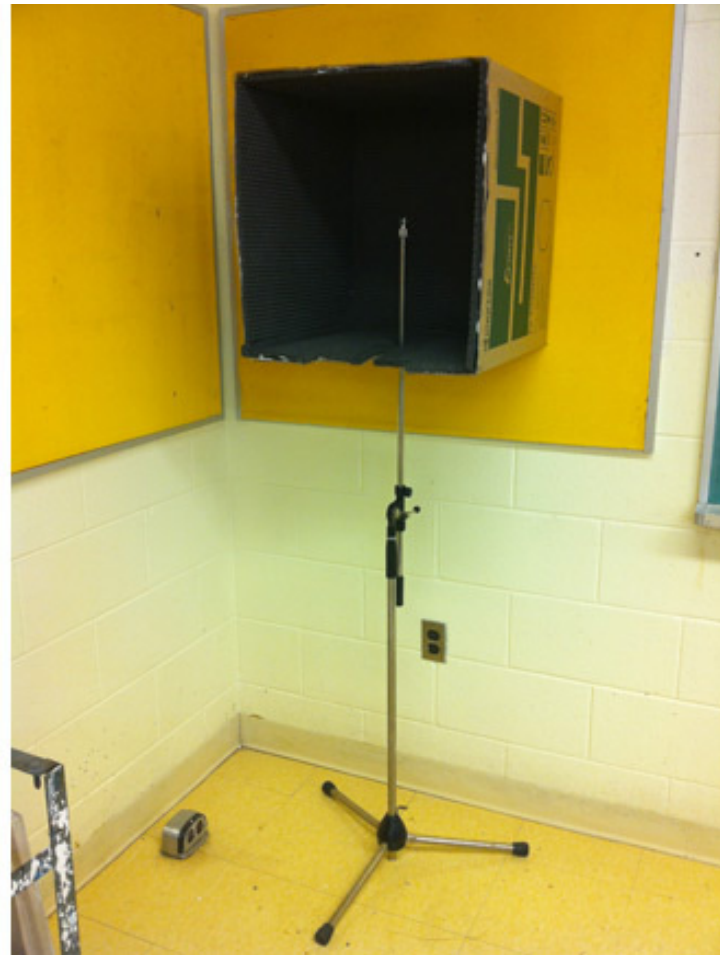
HR: It is an interesting problem, and it seems to depend on the intention of the work. Is the intention to have the work move outside of the community in which it was generated? There is a lot of process in what we do and it means a lot to the folks that participate in that process, but sometimes these things are hard to transmit to another audience—like another art audience.

SMW: The artists who work with the youth council typically have a show at the end in the community gallery. There must be a sort of exhibition at the end that accounts for the time they spent in residence. You have to show how you used the money or that something has come out of it, it can't just be feeling or thoughts. There is this unwritten lesson that because we are teaching the youth there always has to be some sort of outcome. I recently gave a presentation in Switzerland about the Youth Council and the audience had a number of valid critiques of the program. They asked, "What if the what the youth wanted to do was not a project? Or if it was to change something about the AGO?" The audience critiqued the premise of the program that suggests that the youth have the power to determine what they want to do with an artist, that it is totally open, but that at the end of the day the institution controls the outcomes.

HR: The issue is not objects. The art world supports a work that is essentially an email to a curator, but when we work with kids, there is a feeling that it is not serious, that it is not rigorous and there is a demand that the work translate out of the classroom.

PM: It is really hard to negotiate power around collaborative practice. Also, the feedback you are getting from peers and colleagues who are so rigid in their own expectations of art. You have talked about the struggle between creative process and coming out with a product, and I think it really comes back to the capitalist structure and who the stakeholders are. Who is looking for something that can be attached to a funding agency report?

HJ: But we all do that with our jobs, with all the institutions that we negotiate. For example, how do you get that credit for that one student who wants to build a recording booth? How do I think of the



The SEED Production Studio. Photo credit Pamila Matharu 2012–2013.

final product because it satisfies this expectation, but also reflects the complex process?

PM: We constantly negotiate power structures within these relationships; decide what we can do and what our limitations are.

SMW: Over my past 10 years of working with artists and these very large scale projects that the Youth Council does, no two artists have handled it the same way in how they understood what we asked for in a collaborative experience, nor in what they thought about credit. It is very telling that they are all so different in their approach. I worked with artists who said it was collaboration but then at the end of the project didn't want the Youth Council's name attached to the work that the youth had co-created and co-developed with them.

HR: But maybe what is at stake is the issue of power that is often not discussed in collaborative projects. Even if you work collaboratively there could still be a hierarchy. There is this expectation that everyone is equal but that is not the case. When you work with younger participants, of course there is a power dynamic, but how do we name it while also naming the processes of collaboration? That is something we have been thinking about—the discomfort of naming the work as a collaboration.

LL: You know sometimes the only ingredient is time. If your project is two years versus two weeks you are going to see people take up different roles. During the KYTES troupe I witnessed a lot of change in the participants. In particular I remember a guy who was the most resistant to participating at the beginning of the process say, near the end, “Listen to her, she knows what she is talking about.” It was unbelievable at the time.

HJ: Syrus, you were saying that the one truly collaborative project at AGO took the longest time.

SMW: Many of the projects that have worked the best have been the longest. There was this project that we did with Rebecca Tabobondung and John Hupfield: it was a video project called USPN (the Underground Sasquatch Protection Network) and we took 7 or 8 months to create it. It was a project with Indigenous artists talking about Toronto having an unsettled land claim. We created a fictitious TV station, USPN to talk about this. I think it is one thing to say we are going to collaborate, but then if the group is new to each other or new to you, it is very difficult for everyone to put themselves out there and to collaborate on ideas. To allow them to have a voice and power requires time and we don't have a lot of that at the AGO. The Youth Council works together for about a year, so near the end of their time together, they push back with the artist and share their ideas and how the project should go—but at the beginning they typically just say “ok” to what the artists want to do, because they are nervous and just getting their confidence as they get to know each other. So timing is everything.

HR: Having more time can often create better working relationships, and allow for roles and dynamics to shift and be examined over the course of the project. Paradoxically, the meaning and intensity of the process, in many cases, exists only because there is a collective goal—the production of a finished work or some type of outcome.

It seems that the tensions that exist between experience and outcomes persists. This was one of the perceived weaknesses of the community arts movement—that, at the end of the day, the aesthetic qualities of the work were secondary to the experience of participating in its creation. Yet, the dilemma of participation is that most participatory practices are a strategy for audiences to consume work in a hands-on way. In the end participants don't necessarily have the opportunity to change the work or their experiences working within a collaborative process. It is already determined for them. As artists working in education, we experience similar challenges. The measurable outcomes of learning trump both the experience of collaboration, and the formal qualities of the artwork. But it is this formal consideration that might engage an audience beyond those involved in its creation. This is where a different kind of learning might come into play a learning about the slippery and illusive qualities of art—those things that are not so easily quantifiable, that make us curious, delighted, or disoriented.