Community, Conflict, Difference: New Genre Public Art in Winnipeg

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ABSTRACT

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Since the late 1990s, the Crossing Communities Art Project in Winnipeg, Canada has created community-based art centred around collaboration and activism. The project began with exchanges of artwork between women in prison in Manitoba and women artists in Winnipeg. It developed into an organization where women in conflict with the law collaborated on artwork in a wide range of media, including photography, video, performances and urban interventions. This thesis investigates Crossing Communities as a form of new genre public art, and places it in context with other socially engaged art practices that emerged in the 1990s. Like many new genre public art projects, Crossing Communities grew out of feminist activism, community organizing, and a concern with site-specificity. It also exemplifies certain problematic aspects of new genre public art, including the formation of hierarchies between artists and non-artists, and the complicated negotiations that revolve around individual and collective authorship. These issues are examined in depth in this thesis, and are illuminated by interviews with participants, comparisons with other artwork, and a review of relevant literature. Social engagement has become a common theme in contemporary art, with relational aesthetics gaining particular prominence during the past decade. Much of this work hints at the possibility of social change, but remains tied to the notion of art as a sphere separate from society. In contrast, Crossing Communities stretches the boundaries between art and activism and opens up new ways of thinking about community, conflict and difference in Winnipeg's public spaces.

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Thank you, Amma and Gramps, for your love and support. Thank you, Mom and Dad, for the same, and for allowing me to turn your living room into a makeshift office during the summer. Patrick, thank you for listening to me, challenging my ideas and provoking new questions

DEDICATION

To the participants who created the Crossing Communities Art Project.

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INTRODUCTION

I am in Winnipeg, riding the bus down Main Street. It is my usual route to get downtown from my home in the north end of the city. It takes about fifteen minutes, yet it is a trip that often lingers in the back of my mind even when I have reached my destination. I pass by pawn shops, boarded up buildings, seedy bars, drug rehabilitation clinics, and people living in debilitating poverty, who pass in and out of my line of vision. I travel down this street every day, and I try to tell myself that these things are normal—part of the contemporary urban condition. Outside, the cityscape is grey, worn, battered looking, even in summer. The figures blend in with the shabby buildings; they are blemishes in the collective vision of Winnipeg: "One Great City."[1] Even though this is my daily route, I am not sure if this is "My Winnipeg." According to countless local newspaper stories, this part of the city is an unsafe, crime-ridden haven for drugs and prostitution. These issues spring, in part, from Winnipeg's colonial history. The physical and systemic violence done to aboriginal people usually lurks beneath the surface of the urban fabric, yet on Main Street, its presence is undeniable. Although I live nearby, I am an outsider when I look out the window here, and I am privileged enough to choose where to get off the bus.

Like many Canadian cities, Winnipeg is afflicted by a multitude of issues linked to poverty and racism. Riding the bus through this area, I witness these problems without directly experiencing them. I also witness attempts made by different levels of government to alleviate these problems. At best, these have included an array of social programs geared towards addictions, mental health and housing, with the goal of reintegrating individuals into the

[1] Winnipeg has been branded in many ways throughout its history. Civic slogans have included "Love Me, Love My Winnipeg," "One Great City!", and "Heart of the Continent." Winnipeg has been referred to as the murder capital of Canada, the slurpee capital of Canada, and was recently the Cultural Capital of Canada (2010). Recent statistics also suggest that it is the aboriginal capital of Canada, at least in terms of population.

workforce.[2] At worst, tough on crime measures and increased policing punish those who are living in abject poverty without dealing with structural inequalities. The recently accelerated gentrification of downtown Winnipeg has threatened to increase the superficiality of solutions to these problems.[3]

Social, political and economic injustices exist in every Canadian city, but manifest themselves differently in spatial forms and social processes. I am interested in urban issues in Winnipeg because it is the city in which I feel the most personal investment, but also because of the rhetoric that has surrounded its supposed transformation over the past decade. Downtown is being redeveloped; the NHL has returned; exhibitions and essays have touted the city's vibrant cultural scene.[4] Following the 2011 art exhibition *My Winnipeg* (named after Guy Maddin's 2007 film) at La Maison Rouge in Paris, a review in *Le monde* pronounced: "Dans le froid et l'ennui, la ville canadienne de Winnipeg engendre de très bons artistes" [In the cold and boredom, the Canadian city of Winnipeg generates very good artists].[5] And yet, with all these successes being heralded, I cannot help but wonder how these changes will affect the city's more vulnerable citizens. It seems likely to me that in the near future, the gentrification that has begun

[2] One noteworthy example is the recent conversion of Winnipeg's notorious Bell Hotel, located on Main Street, to low-income housing that operates on a "housing-first" policy, meaning that residents do not have to overcome addictions before moving in. See Bartley Kives, "Bell to become homeless haven," *Winnipeg Free Press,* Apr. 23, 2010.

[3] For a discussion of the problems associated with tough-on-crime measures in a Winnipeg context, see Elizabeth Comack, Lawrence Deane, Larry Morrissette, and Jim Silver, "If You Want to Change Violence in the 'Hood, You Have to Change the 'Hood: Violence and Street Gangs in Winnipeg's Inner City," A Report Presented to Honourable Dave Chomiak, Minister of Justice and Attorney General, Government of Manitoba, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, September 10, 2009. For a discussion of gentrification in Winnipeg see Jim Silver, "Gentrification in West Broadway? Contested Space in a Winnipeg Inner City Neighbourhood," report published by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, May 25, 2006.

[4] Recent exhibitions include *Subconscious City*, Winnipeg Art Gallery, 2008; *My Winnipeg,* La Maison Rouge, Paris, 2011; *Out of Nowhere,* Julie Saul Gallery, New York, 2012. For articles highlighting Winnipeg's cultural scene, refer to almost any issue of *Border Crossings* magazine, especially issue 107 (August 2008), a special feature on Winnipeg art and artists.

[5] Philippe Dagen, "Dans le froid et l'ennui, la ville canadienne de Winnipeg engendre de très bons artistes," *Le monde,* June 19, 2011. *My Winnipeg* was curated by Paula Aisemberg, Sigrid Dahle, Hervé di Rosa, Noam Gonick and Anthony Kiendl.

on Main Street will continue to creep north. Residents of single-room occupancy hotels on this strip will be displaced. Bus riders might not even see them from the windows anymore.

Thinking about my daily route through the city, I realize that these transitory experiences have, in many ways, affected my interest in public urban spaces and socially engaged artwork. In January 2011, I reread the catalogue for an art exhibition titled *Subconscious City* held at the Winnipeg Art Gallery in 2008, which was curated by performance artists Shawna Dempsey and Lorri Millan. In an essay included in the catalogue, they allude to the disorder, chaos and conflict that lie beneath official representations of Winnipeg:

> In a river city, that which we perceive as orderly—the sewers that take our waste, the roads that carry our vehicles, the systems that supply electricity, water and gas, and the laws of ownership that define private and public space—suddenly give way to nature, or history, or the chaos of just plain lack of planning.[6]

An essay by art historian Claudine Majzels also examines the way that idealized representations of cities obscure social problems. Majzels discussed the Crossing Communities Art Project, a collaborative, interdisciplinary project involving exchanges between contemporary artists and women in conflict with the law. She wrote that through the project, "women and youth who have been imprisoned or are at risk of imprisonment are reconnected with their freedom of expression."[7] Reading this essay opened my eyes to the manifold forms that public art can take in cities. It sparked thoughts about invisibility and exclusion in urban spaces; about artwork that is socially engaged and concerned with public issues and debates; about site-specificity, citizenship, and democracy.

[6] Shawna Dempsey and Lorri Millan, *Subconscious City,* (Winnipeg: Winnipeg Art Gallery, 2008), 101.
[7] Claudine Majzels, "The Ideal City," in *Subconscious City*, 83.

In Crossing Communities' video *Bus Stories* (2010), aboriginal and immigrant youth describe their experiences riding the city bus.[8] Shots of downtown Winnipeg from the bus windows pass by, as the narrators reveal feelings of anxiety and discomfort. Their stories revolve around a general sense of feeling targeted in public spaces, because of their race and their age. People often move away from them, avoid eye contact, or stare disapprovingly. The same grey buildings and streets that I observe on my bus rides are shown in the video, but the narration tinges the city with an unfamiliar and hostile light. Watching *Bus Stories* forced me to look differently at a place I pass by every day. The video provides an entry point into the work carried out by Crossing Communities, and it is one of many projects in which participants collaborated to address issues affecting their everyday lives. As well as introducing the urban focus of Crossing Communities, it provokes reflection both on my relationship to Winnipeg, and my vantage point within this thesis.

Crossing Communities grew out of work that artist Edith Regier was doing in the late 1990s. Regier began to offer art workshops at the Portage Correctional Centre in Manitoba, and then organized a series of exchanges between imprisoned women and women artists working in Winnipeg. This evolved into a more permanent project that existed simultaneously as organization and art practice, and became a means for creating collaborative artwork. Women who had recently been in prison or had conditional sentences came to Crossing Communities to make art together, share stories, and participate in meaningful exchange and dialogue. From the initial prison exchange to the more permanent Crossing Communities format, the artworks have included drawings, paintings, comics, sculptures, videos, performances and other multimedia work. I explore many of these projects in this thesis. As well as the objects themselves, however,

[8] *Bus Stories* and many other videos produced by Crossing Communities can be viewed on the website www.lookinginspeakingout.com, which was launched in 2009 as a platform for showing the work of participants.

I am interested in looking at the collaborative model of art making developed at Crossing Communities and exploring how, as Majzels points out, "the doing of the project, in and of itself, is the work of art."[9]

While Crossing Communities brings up a number of issues that could be mulled over at length,[10] I have structured my thesis around five themes. These undoubtedly overlap, but provide a general methodological framework around which to compose my argument and ideas. As the title of this thesis suggests, my aim is to analyze Crossing Communities as a new genre public art project, and to explore the problematics of such artwork within the context of contemporary issues and debates. This includes looking at three major themes that are addressed within each section: community, conflict and difference. In the first section, I contextualize Crossing Communities as a new genre public art project, and include a review of relevant literature. In *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art,* Suzanne Lacy and other authors consider artwork made from the 1960s to the 1990s, and examine new directions in public art that emerged during this period.[11] In the introduction to the book, Lacy discusses this work broadly, and argues that much of it has been previously written about as medium-specific, which has detracted from its social and political potential. *Mapping the Terrain* examines a shift away from traditional public art, which includes monuments, statues and modernist sculpture, towards new genre public art, which to Lacy is "art that uses both traditional and nontraditional media to communicate and interact with a broad and diversified audience about issues directly relevant to their lives."[12] Lacy lists several precedents for this kind of work, including politically committed artwork and

[9] Majzels, 83.
[10] Some topics that lie outside the framework of this thesis but would be worth investigating further include the documentation of community-based art; copyright and authorship issues; oral histories; relationships between craft, traditional knowledge, and new media; art therapy and social work.
[11] Suzanne Lacy, *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1995).
[12] Lacy, 19.

cultural theory of the 1960s, marxist and feminist activism, and artistic resistance to the culture wars in the United States during the early 1990s. Grant Kester has also written about projects centred around community, dialogue and social change. In *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art* (2004) he referred to these practices as "dialogical art."[13] Rather than emphasizing the finalized object or the singular maker, the projects that he examines in this book unfold over time through dialogue and exchange. These ideas were further explored in *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context* (2011), in which Kester develops a nuanced critique of aesthetic and political autonomy that is particularly relevant to my research on Crossing Communities.

By examining writing by Lacy and Kester, among others, I aim to connect the rise of new genre public art in the 1990s to the contemporary moment of socially engaged public artwork. Edith Regier was inspired by Lacy's art and writing, and Crossing Communities may therefore be studied as an example of how the projects she gave name to have spread and adapted to different local contexts, while retaining their political and feminist roots. In my initial discussion of new genre public art in the first section of this thesis, I analyze Crossing Communities' *Passing Pictures with Prisoners* project, which began in the late 1990s.[14] Then, I turn to the collaboratively produced video *Butterfly,* which memorializes missing and murdered aboriginal women in Canada. I compare these works to other new genre public artworks, placing Crossing Communities in context with historical and contemporary examples.

In the second section I examine the feminist politics structuring the project in more depth, and focus on the place of the individual within the community. I begin by looking at the feminist activism associated with new genre public art, which is linked to notions of solidarity common to

[13] Grant Kester, *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).
[14] See the Appendix for a timeline of projects that have been carried out by Crossing Communities.

second wave feminism of the 1970s. I consider two collectively produced Crossing Communities videos. *Women and Girls in the Sex Trade* was made by sex trade workers who were tired of being stereotyped as either victims or villains, and wanted to take control of self-representation through art. The video *Pictures of Self Harm* is also concerned with self-representation, and deals with issues related to self-inflicted violence. The work was screened in both Winnipeg and Kathmandu, Nepal. It acted as a "conversation piece" (to use Grant Kester's term) by initiating dialogue across distance and culture, bringing up questions about local and global feminisms, and inspiring the creation of additional artworks. In thinking about these two videos, I analyze writing by theorist Gayatri Spivak and First Nations scholar Verna St. Denis, and I argue that the evolution of Crossing Communities exemplifies tensions between community solidarity and radical difference present in aspects of feminist theory.

In the third section I continue to explore issues related to difference, identity and marginalization, but through a postcolonial lens. I address Hal Foster's assertion that new genre public artists are engaged in primitivist fantasy, and demonstrate the way that Crossing Communities' projects have challenged this claim. I focus on two works: a collage and a postcard project, both of which come from a place of deeply personal, anti-colonial rage. I return to the scholarship of Spivak in this section to examine her concept of subalternity and how it relates to notions of subjectivity, identity and community brought up through these particular artworks.

In the fourth section I look at the site-specific nature of Crossing Communities. Winnipeg has a history of public art comparable to other cities, involving sculptures and monuments focused on beautification and historical commemoration. As many authors have pointed out, these works claim to speak for the community—but which community do they represent? I

examine writing by Miwon Kwon and Rosalyn Deutsche, and argue that Crossing Communities has provoked questions about whose voices are included and whose are excluded from Winnipeg's public spaces. I discuss an urban intervention carried out by a former Crossing Communities participant who wished to speak out against gentrification in her neighbourhood.

The last section focuses less on individual works, and more on the structure of Crossing Communities. I return to the concept of new genre public art to make comparisons between the working methods of the organization, and other contemporary manifestations of socially engaged art, particularly relational aesthetics. I examine writing by Nicolas Bourriaud, Claire Bishop, Grant Kester and Amelia Jones, and compare the projects they address to those carried out by Crossing Communities. I argue that practices and theories associated with new genre public art have informed, and in some cases are at the heart of contemporary manifestations of art aspiring to transform society.

As well as these interconnected frameworks, my thesis is structured by three forms of research. First, the primary and secondary research that I have done on Crossing Communities, including archival research, journal articles and books, and interviews with participants. Second, the artworks made at Crossing Communities, which take on their own life once they become a part of public visual culture. Third, contemporary and historical texts on public and activist art that have helped situate Crossing Communities in relation to larger discourses on the relationship between art, politics and social change.

It is worth including a note about language here: I frequently refer to "participants" at Crossing Communities, and "artists" who were employed by the organization as mentors. I realize that it is problematic to separate these terms, and I would much rather use the term "participant-artist" to refer to everyone who took part in the collaborative process. However, I

use these terms separately to acknowledge the fact that most "participants" came to Crossing Communities after having been in conflict with the law, while "artists" tended to have established careers in their field. It is important to point out that these distinctions became much less rigid as participants began to develop confidence and self-identify as artists.

At the moment, Crossing Communities is shifting gears. In a telephone conversation with Regier in September 2011, she informed me that she was considering ending or scaling back the project, mainly due to issues of funding. With this in mind, it is an apt time to consider its value and to look deeper into ways in which it connects with histories of public, site-specific and political art. While the project has been commended and highly praised by some, it has not received as much attention from the arts community as might be expected considering the current interest of many artists, writers, and curators in dialogical and relational art, and in connections between culture and urbanism. This lack of recognition is in part due to the interdisciplinary nature of Crossing Communities, as well as its ambiguous structure. Throughout its history it has existed in a space between art practice and organization and this flexibility has resulted in both advantages and disadvantages. It may be difficult to conceive of Crossing Communities as a public artwork, especially in the traditional sense. Yet as many critics have pointed out (including Suzanne Lacy), community-based performative artworks are more likely to investigate (and interrogate) the term "public" than a traditional statue or monument.

Another factor that may contribute to the lack of art historical scholarship is that Crossing Communities revolves not only around art but around human relationships as well. Given the troubled lives of many of the participants, these relationships did not always make for a harmonious environment. While many meaningful and empowering bonds have formed throughout the duration of the project, there have also been internal conflicts. It became apparent

to me while interviewing participants that there were as many ways to look at the project as there were people involved in it. I have tried to represent as many points of view as possible in this thesis. It is important to address the sense of conflict that several participants have described, yet my aim is not to dissect the inner workings of the organization or to produce a sociological study. Instead, I focus on conflicts that I view as having shaped the production of art at Crossing Communities.

While this thesis is focused on a contemporary organization, my research places Crossing Communities within the framework of art history, and connects it with theories and ideas that originated in other contexts. While my focus is on art, I recognize the interdisciplinary nature of the organization. I broach the line between art and politics, which is no longer even a dividing line but a porous border, permeable and constantly shifting. It is a politically pertinent time to write this thesis. The conservative agenda set by Prime Minister Stephen Harper has not only resulted in funding cuts to the arts, but to programs intended to aid vulnerable citizens.[15] Instead of addressing the structural causes of crime, the federal government has proposed to build larger prisons and direct more money to tough-on-crime measures.[16] This has moved the Canadian justice system closer to that of the United States, which is failing financially and, as many critics would argue, ethically as well. I believe that art can enable myriad forms of resistance in response to political policies that shape society. This belief is shared by authors of numerous art historical texts throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. My interest is in framing

[15] In 2006, the Harper Government dismantled a multi-billion dollar national childcare program. In the same year it cut funding to Status of Women Canada, an organization that worked to advance women's economic equality and human rights. In 2010 the federal government cut funding for Sisters in Spirit, an organization that compiled data on missing and murdered aboriginal women. In the case of both Status of Women Canada and Sisters in Spirit, the cuts were due to a restructuring of federal funding, whereby organizations that devoted more than ten percent of their funds to lobbying or political advocacy were no longer eligible.

[16] See Steven Chase, "Weighty Tory crime bill targets drugs, sex offenders, 'out-of-control' youth," *Globe and Mail,* September 20, 2011; Jeffrey Simpson, "Scary are the Tory measures to combat crime," *Globe and Mail,* September 24, 2011; Gabrielle Giroday, "Crime bill unfairly targets women, aboriginals, critics say," *Winnipeg Free Press,* October 20, 2011.

debates about art, politics and social change as they relate to Crossing Communities and its specific cultural and historical context. The project demonstrates ties between art and politics by bringing up sensitive issues for debate and discussion within the public sphere, by examining the means by which particular communities are placed under the umbrella term "marginalized," by examining systemic issues related to the justice system, and by focusing on empowerment and community building through enabling, participatory cultural work.

SECTION 1

Crossing Communities as New Genre Public Art

Crossing Communities was inspired by the work that Edith Regier did with women prisoners in Manitoba in the late 1990s. After receiving an MFA from the University of Houston, Regier returned to Winnipeg, and in 1996 she began a mentorship with theorist and psychoanalyst Jeanne Randolph through MAWA (Mentoring Artists for Women's Art). It was through the support of MAWA (which I discuss below in relation to feminism) that Regier initiated the Portage Art Project, which took place in Winnipeg from 1996 to 1999 and involved weekly visits to the Portage Correctional Centre to make art with imprisoned women (fig. 1).

Regier asserts that these workshops were a way "to explore structures of power—who had power and who didn't have power."[17] Her desire to connect with imprisoned women came out of an interest in subjective portraiture involving dialogue and communication fostered during her fine arts education. Prisons represent the ultimate site in our society in which creativity and expression are censored and individuals are stripped of the means and resources to express themselves. According to the Elizabeth Fry Society of Manitoba (a justice advocacy organization), eighty-two percent of all women and ninety percent of aboriginal women serving federal prison sentences have histories of physical and/or sexual abuse.[18] This is an alarmingly high number. For these women, the lack of an outlet for self-expression can suffocate any chance

[17] Edith Regier, interview with the author, 26 July 2011.
[18] "Facts Sheet: Human and Fiscal Costs of Prison," Elizabeth Fry Society of Manitoba, http://www.efsmanitoba.org/Facts-Sheet.page, accessed January 20, 2012. An American study examined differences between men and women in prison, stating that "among State prison inmates 1 in 20 men and 1 in 4 women said they had been sexually abused before age 18; 1 in 10 men and 1 in 4 women, physically abused. Over half of the abused women said they were hurt by spouses or boyfriends, and less than a third, by parents or guardians. Over half of the abused men in correctional populations identified parents or guardians as abusers." Caroline Wolf Harlow, "Prior Abuse Reported by Inmates and Probationers," Bureau of Justice Statistics, Selected Findings, April 1999, http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/parip.pdf, accessed January 20, 2012.

for individual personal growth, as well as the ability to connect personal problems to larger societal issues.

Regier was interested in bringing more artists into the prison project, and in building connections between women. This was the defining goal of *Passing Pictures with Prisoners*, an exchange of artwork that took place over the course of a year and ended with an exhibition at Urban Shaman Gallery in 1999. The project involved collaborations between four established artists: Connie Cohen, Colleen Cutschall, Shawna Dempsey, and Debby Keeper, and six imprisoned women: Pat Aylesworth, Wendy Cook, Yvonne Johnson, Amanda Lepine, Erica Monias, and Michelle Nepinak. In the book that documents these exchanges, *Passing Pictures with Prisoners,* the artwork consists of drawings, letters, and poems. Some works are individual creations and some are collaborative—these are described as having been made "in conversation with" a particular artist. On the inside cover is a photograph documenting a performance by Ana Mendieta (whose work was not part of the project or the exhibition), and a quote by Australian artist and activist Lilla Watson: "If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together." According to Regier, the quote was "adopted by the women in P4W [the Prison for Women in Kingston, Ontario] to represent them."[19] The next four images in the book show artwork by the mentoring artists. This includes a photograph of Dempsey's 1998 performance *Tableaux Vivant: Eaton's Catalogue 1976* (fig. 2), and a still from Keeper's 1995 video, *Anishna What!?* (fig. 3). Following this, a drawing by Amanda Lepine, "in conversation with Debby Keeper," faces the introductory essay by Edith Regier (fig. 4).

The book contains four essays, in which each writer was asked to respond to a different artist-prisoner exchange. In "Lost Objects/Lost Words," art historian Dot Tuer reflects on the

[19] Edith Regier, *Passing Pictures with Prisoners* (Winnipeg: Mentoring Artists for Women's Art, 2001), 5.

exchange that took place between Connie Cohen and Yvonne Johnson (who is known for having co-authored the book *Stolen Life: Journey of a Cree Woman*[20]). Cohen and Johnson exchanged letters and created dolls for each other (fig. 5 & 6). Johnson made a ceramic baby held together by a spare, wooden frame, while Cohen's doll was made of wrapped bandages on which a poem was written. Tuer wrote that it "reminded me of a voodoo doll, an object of sympathetic magic which passes consciousness from one site to another without contact."[21] She suggests that consciousness may be embedded in a material object, and implies that this object initiates communication and dialogue, even without direct contact having been made between the women.

Essays by Jeanne Randolph and Catherine Mattes also touch upon issues of dialogue and communication. Randolph writes in her characteristic, free-form manner about the exchanges between Dempsey, Michelle Nepinak and Pat Aylewsorth, which included collaged letters and cartoon drawings. In her essay, Métis curator and critic Catherine Mattes discusses the exchange between Keeper and Lepine, who are both aboriginal (Keeper is from the Fisher River Cree Nation, Manitoba). Keeper, who is older than Lepine, sent artwork that she had made as a younger woman. Lepine responded by sending Keeper drawings and poems. Lepine's second drawing included in the book resembles Woodlands style art, although it also features eyes, heart symbols, and dollar signs (fig. 7).

The foolscap paper underscores the lack of resources available for making art in prison, and one gets the sense that this drawing was done hastily and perhaps covertly. This is confirmed by an excerpt in the book that discusses the confiscation of Lepine's drawings by prison officials. She attempted to send work to Keeper several times, but had the pieces taken away, with the

[20] Rudy Wiebe and Yvonne Johnson, *Stolen Life: Journey of a Cree Woman* (Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998).
[21] Dot Tuer, "Lost Objects/Lost Words," in *Passing Pictures with Prisoners,* 28.

only explanation being that it was probably "gang related."[22] Mattes writes about the exchange between these women, stating that "with each poem or drawing sent, intimacy was created between these two women, a trust formed between two strangers who were able to resist the silence and share their private memories with each other."[23] The idea of bringing private memories, feelings and experiences into the public sphere is a quality present in much new genre public art, and is a recurrent theme throughout this thesis.

An exchange of artwork between Colleen Cutschall and Wendy Cook might be viewed as the most collaborative (fig. 8). Cook sent drawings and poems to Cutschall, including a poem titled *Alone* and a drawing of her looking small and frightened in an isolation cell. Cutschall juxtaposed this drawing with a more confident looking self-portrait by Cook and placed grass and leaves over top to signify strength "in the earth and in the spirit."[24] In an article published in the feminist journal *Herizons,* Bev Greenberg points out that the added pieces were attached by Cutschall using cellophane tape, which "allowed the women to move the pieces around and make some decisions about what Cutschall had done."[25]

Regier portrays the exchanges that took place as a kind of "visual listening," citing Suzi Gablik's 1995 essay, "Connective Aesthetics."[26] According to Regier, this process emphasizes "using art not as a mastering of formal concerns but as the action and the document of the communication made visible between the maker and the receiver."[27] This statement highlights the approach towards art making that Crossing Communities would take over the next decade. The project involved established artists working with participants who had varying degrees of

[22] Catherine Mattes, "Private Memories in a Public Sphere: The Process of Resisting, Reclaiming and Remembering Through Art," in *Passing Pictures with Prisoners,* 33.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid, 19.
[25] Bev Greenberg, "Prison Project Unlocks Artistic Expression," *Herizons* 14.2 (Fall 2000): 9.
[26] Suzi Gablik, "Connective Aesthetics," in *Mapping the Terrain,* 74-87.
[27] Regier, *Passing Pictures with Prisoners,* 19.

experience making art. While the mentoring artists possessed more technical skills and a greater awareness of art history, the exchange of knowledge and ideas worked both ways. The artworks that were created may be seen as documents of this communicative exchange. In this kind of project, art is not an isolated activity, but a way of building dialogue and forming relationships with others. *Passing Pictures* may be seen as a challenge to traditional modernist notions of art in which art comes from a singular place of genius and is characterized by "mastery" of a particular medium. The works that made up the exchange demonstrate a wide range of technical skill and familiarity with different media, and highlight the many artistic influences that participants brought to the project, from pop culture, to aboriginal cultural traditions, to modern art. They also demonstrate Gablik's notion of visual listening, through which each woman is an active participant in making meaning through art. The *Passing Pictures* project thereby illustrates a concept that is fundamental to new genre public art: aesthetics do not exist in an isolated sphere, but are inextricably linked to the communicative and political power of art.

By citing Gablik's essay, Regier connects the project to art practices that hinge on communication and dialogue. She describes Suzanne Lacy's book, *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art* (1995) as having inspired the prison exchange, and it is therefore worth examining this book in more detail. The essays in *Mapping the Terrain* (including Gablik's essay) address the shift in thinking about public art that has occurred in the past several decades. Lacy writes that since the 1960s, "artists of varying backgrounds and perspectives have been working in a manner that resembles political and social activity but is distinguished by its aesthetic sensibility."[28] The political atmosphere is described by Lacy and other authors in the book as having been a trigger for new genre public art. Allan Kaprow discusses the artistic shifts that took place in this decade, including happenings and performance art, which "confronted

[28] Lacy, 19.

publics and arts professionals with strange occurrences bearing little resemblance to the known arts."[29] Lucy Lippard also addresses the importance of this moment in culture, writing:

> Since around 1966 there has been a body of work that questions all of the structures by which art exists in the world—the modernist myths, the commodity status, effects on the ecology, male and white dominance, the precious object, the specialized or upper-class audience, and the cultural confinement of artists themselves.[30]

Kaprow and Lippard make it clear that while new genre public art is connected to other art movements, its connections to political activism, feminist organizing and marxist cultural theory of the 1960s were just as important to its formation. The second historical moment that shaped new genre public art was the period in the early 1990s now referred to as the Culture Wars. Political debates in the United States centred on government funding for cultural organizations, including the National Endowment for the Arts, and questions of value and morality in art were pushed to the forefront of American consciousness. It was in this context of heated debate about the relationship between art and politics that Lacy's book was published.

In Gablik's essay, she discusses a video documentary by artists Jonathan Borofsky and Gary Glassman titled *Prisoners* (1985), in which the artists visited imprisoned men and women and recorded their stories. Gablik writes that "the knowledge that one is being heard … creates a sense of empowerment."[31] In her opinion, the creation of social change through art by marginalized communities cannot happen without this sense of empowerment. In Gablik's opinion, *Prisoners* provided an outlet for individuals whose voices are not regularly heard. However, while the documentary highlights the relationship between artists and a particular

[29] Allan Kaprow, "Success and Failure When Art Changes," in *Mapping the Terrain,* 154.
[30] Lucy Lippard, "Looking Around: Where We Are, Where We Could Be," in *Mapping the Terrain,* 124.
[31] Gablik, 81.

community, and emphasizes listening and dialogue, the subjects (prisoners) did not have a say in the final aesthetic product.

In contrast, Lacy has created several works that have attempted to bring individual voices of community members to the forefront of the artistic process. *Doing Time* was a collaborative piece created at the Bedford Hills Maximum Security Correctional Facility in New York in 1993. Lacy and a group of women who were part of the prison's Family Violence Program made artwork out of three wrecked cars, turning them into sculptures. Another project by Lacy, *Code 33,* involved organizing meetings between youth and police in an Oakland, California neighbourhood. The project was meant to "reduce police hostility toward youth, provide them with a set of skills to participate in their communities, and generate a more profound understanding of their needs."[32] The project took place over a period of three years, and the final performance involved clusters of conversations held on the rooftop of a parking garage. Participants in *Code 33* created video portraits of Oakland neighbourhoods, which were projected outwards, facing the city (fig. 9).

Peggy Diggs has also created new genre public art around issues of violence and social justice. *Domestic Violence Milk Carton* (1992) began when the artist interviewed a woman in prison who had killed her abusive husband. With the help of Creative Time, a New York city-based public art organization, Diggs created and circulated 1.5 million milk cartons printed with the question: "When you argue at home, does it always get out of hand?" (fig. 10). Art historian Patricia C. Phillips writes that Peggy Diggs' work "transforms individual stories into public narratives," and that in this piece, "an immense process of delivery concluded with an intimate

[32] Suzanne Lacy, "The Oakland Projects," on Suzanne Lacy's official website, accessed November 1, 2011, www.suzannelacy.com.

encounter with the product. The vast network ultimately reaches home."[33] This transformation from individual story to public narrative was crucial, since according to Diggs, the supermarket was the only place the woman's husband allowed her to go by herself. Diggs has worked on similar projects in other cities, and uses spaces that are highly visible, such as billboards and buses. In 1993 she carried out a project in Winnipeg that was sponsored by Plug In Institute of Contemporary Art. She interviewed several organizations in the city and then printed posters about domestic violence that were placed on the sides of transit buses (fig. 11).

Another example of new genre public art is provided by the Austrian group WochenKlausur. Since the 1990s, they have performed what they call "concrete interventions." A 1994 project facilitated dialogue between politicians, journalists, sex workers and activists on the topic of prostitution and drug use in Zurich. WochenKlausur invited sixty public officials (including the mayor and the police chief) to engage in conversation while aboard a boat on Lake Zurich (fig. 12). The intervention effectively placed a spotlight on the issues in question, and WochenKlausur was able to build support for the establishment of a women's shelter. According to the group, the project also resulted in "small improvements on particular issues, such as the controlled distribution of narcotics to AIDS sufferers or the representation of users in court by social workers."[34] The experience allowed women to bond over shared experiences of sexual abuse and domestic violence, and to connect these experiences to larger political issues.

In *Conversation Pieces,* Grant Kester highlights WochenKlausur as an example of dialogical art, which revolves around conversation among and between individuals and communities. Rather than resulting in an object or performance, it is the conversations

[33] Patricia C. Phillips, "Peggy Diggs: Private Acts and Public Art," in *But is it Art? The Spirit of Art as Activism,* ed. Nina Felshin (Seattle: Bay Press, 1995), 286, 295.
[34] "Shelter for Drug Addicted Women," on WochenKlausur's official website, accessed November 14, 2011, http://www.wochenklausur.at/projekte/02p_kurz_en.htm.

themselves that make up the artwork. Kester examines the writing of modernist critics such as Clive Bell, Clement Greenberg and Walter Benjamin, all of whom valued artwork that was radically new and could generate an aesthetic shock. For them, art could be defined as avant-garde when it caused an epiphanic reaction in the viewer. For Kester, groups such as WochenKlausur are involved in a fundamentally different project. Rather than creating work that involves a sudden moment of shock or realization, they produce work in which aesthetic understanding unfolds over time through dialogue and exchange. Kester points out that this notion is not necessarily a new thing. For early modern philosophers such as Kant, aesthetic experience was not to be found solely in art objects, but in "the very process of communication that the art object catalyzes."[35] Kester elaborates on ideas surrounding communication and dialogue in *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context* (2011). Several of his ideas relate to Lacy's arguments in *Mapping the Terrain.* Lacy argued that new genre public art operates as both a symbolic gesture and a concrete action.[36] In *The One and the Many,* Kester explores these different modes of operation. He develops a critique of aesthetic autonomy, asserting that within modernism, artists who are critical of society have paradoxically adopted a position of detachment from society. He argues that many contemporary artists who make work dealing with politics or communities have retreated into textual or allegorical space, in order to avoid the messiness of engaging with actual communities.

As an example, Kester refers to the work of artist Francis Alÿs. *When Faith Moves Mountains* was a large-scale collaborative work that took place in the desert outside Lima, Peru, and involved hundreds of volunteers attempting to move a sand dune using shovels. The work has been described by critics as representing the possibility of social change through the

[35] Kester, *Conversation Pieces,* 90.
[36] Lacy, 46.

transformation of individual consciousness and the creation of convivial community. It therefore bears some resemblance to new genre public art projects. However, Kester argues that Alÿs' work operates through "a form of poetic withdrawal and allegorical distanciation," avoiding the supposedly "impure" space of political activism.[37] He points out that the volunteers were bused in university students, and residents of the nearby slum were not invited to participate. Alÿs wanted to avoid the possibility of exploitation, yet by not inviting the slum residents to participate, they became objects instead of potential collaborators. Kester writes that in this work "the only hope for a positive form of action, capable of resisting co-option and complicity, lies in the orchestration of a singular moment of joyful collectivity that is so brief, so ephemeral, so utterly disconnected from any broader or more sustainable narrative of resistance or emancipation, that it vanishes almost at the moment it is expressed."[38] *When Faith Moves Mountains,* according to Kester, is an allegory of political change that displaces any moment of concrete action into the future. In contrast, he describes several projects that are neither symbolic nor scripted.[39] Instead, they demonstrate "a pragmatic openness to site and situation, a willingness to engage with specific cultures and communities in a creative and improvisational manner, a concern with non-hierarchical and participatory processes, and a critical and self-reflexive relationship to practice itself."[40] For example, the Argentinian collective Ala Plastica worked with residents of the Rio de la Plata basin near Buenos Aires to address environmental and economic issues caused by large-scale development in the region (specifically, the building of a massive transportation system). Ala Plastica initiated the *AA Project,* a "mapping procedure

[37] Grant Kester, *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 71.
[38] Ibid, 75.
[39] Kester discusses the work of Ala Plastica in Argentina, Park Fiction in Germany, Dialogue in India, Huit Facettes in Senegal, and Project Row Houses in the United States.
[40] Kester, *The One and the Many*, 125.

[that] was combined with various exercises designed to recover and collect local knowledge about the region."[41] The group collaborated with residents to create emergency housing modules that could be used during floods, and helped to cultivate and find new uses for willow trees to encourage local economies. As well as collaborating with residents, they worked with activist groups, NGOs and scientists, thereby crossing the boundaries of aesthetic purity that define modern art. In contrast to *When Faith Moves Mountains,* Ala Plastica's *AA Project* involved collaborating with residents in a particular place to produce concrete action.

Comparing these two projects is a good way to grasp the distinction between symbolic and concrete action in community-based art that have been written about by both Kester and Lacy. These differences have major implications for my analysis of Crossing Communities. *The One and The Many* raises key issues regarding aesthetic autonomy, and Kester's arguments add to Lacy's discussion of new genre public art as a participatory and political practice. Caroline Stevens' doctoral dissertation "Making Art Matter: Narrating the Collaborative Creative Process" (2001) is also worth examining in relation to aesthetics and activism. Stevens focuses on three community-based works that she describes as activist and collaborative.[42] In her critical analysis of each project, she looks at three themes: the control of aesthetics, the relationship of participants to the art work, and the role of leadership within collaborative practices. These are useful criteria to take into account when looking at the lasting impression of community-based art. Stevens describes the way that collaborative art projects that engage with communities can create social change. She writes that "creativity and the collective production of art can foster social and political activism in communities by promoting affective transformations…[which]

[41] Ibid*,* 26.
[42] Stevens looks at a collaboration between the Cree community of Oujé-Bougoumou in northern Québec and aboriginal architect Douglas Cardinal; Le Centre Artisanal des Femmes (CAF) in Montreal; and the Bread and Puppet Theater in Vermont.

implies change to both individual subjectivities and the restructuring of social systems."[43] Stevens argues that individual agency is encouraged through participation in culture, which in turn enables the creation of new political spaces. This is a crucial point, as it helps to clarify the connections between the individual and the community that define Crossing Communities as an activist organization, and as a new genre public artwork. *Passing Pictures with Prisoners* and other projects I will examine demonstrate that the organization does not operate in a textual or symbolic space, but like Ala Plastica, WochenKlausur, and other groups, engages in direct action through collaboration with communities. Embracing aesthetic impurity can lead to complications, which I will address in the following sections. However, this impurity enables community-based art practices to move beyond representation and function as activism.

New genre public art was a topic for discussion in Winnipeg in 2001, when Plug In Institute of Contemporary Art hosted a forum featuring Suzanne Lacy and Edith Regier as guest speakers. The event coincided with the book launch of *Passing Pictures with Prisoners,* as well as an exhibition titled *Conditional Sentences / Reparative Pictures* at Gallery 1C03 at the University of Winnipeg. This exhibition included much of the work that had been made during the prison exchanges, including both individual and collaborative works. Also included were recreations of a restraint chair used at the Winnipeg Remand Centre, and "The Hole," a four-foot by eight-foot confinement cell at the Portage Correctional Centre. In 2000, prior to the Gallery 1C03 exhibition, Regier initiated the Crossing Communities Art Project. She applied for and received an individual artist grant through the Manitoba Arts Council, and used this funding to open a downtown art studio for clients of the Elizabeth Fry Society, a women's justice advocacy organization. Crossing Communities continued the work that began during *Passing Pictures with*

[43] Caroline Stevens, "Making Art Matter: Narrating the Collaborative Creative Process" (PhD Diss., Concordia University, 2001), 11.

Prisoners, but involved more participants, a wider range of media, and more collaborative working methods. Regier discussed these methods in a 2011 essay published in *Canadian Theatre Review:*

> The first days of our projects are spent interacting, eating, talking, listening to each other, and exploring the technical uses of cameras, video cameras, sound equipment, drawings, paintings, performance, and scriptwriting in open structured workshops. As we build trust we move into the next phase where participants decide what they want to include in their videos, online, and in forums. We work collectively to bring their ideas/stories from discussions through to the final production. We cycle through these phases sometimes for days, weeks, months—and with some participants for years plumbing the depths for a shared communication. Our group process is the formal structure through which we can collectively create; the sum of our interactions brings us closer to knowing what we cannot understand alone. When we are in agreement that we have produced something that represents the stories that were told, we present our work to large and small audiences in galleries, in forums with hospital staff, prison staff, to governments, in university classrooms, and in other public events. We then video-document the dialogues that take place during the presentations and these become part of the body of work.[44]

This process came about through many years of trial and error. It could be described as unique to Crossing Communities, although it bears resemblance to other community-based art practices, including those of Lacy, Diggs and WochenKlausur.

A video project by Crossing Communities titled *Butterfly* exemplifies the working process that developed as the organization grew. In 2007 several participants created the video during workshops facilitated by artist Jess MacCormack. In the video, faces of missing and murdered women in Canada are reanimated as butterflies against a blue sky (fig. 13). A soundtrack is provided by Pat Rix and the Holdfast Community Choir, an Australian group composed of artists with disabilities. The jarring, anguished sounds contrast with the rather lighthearted images, producing a memorial that simultaneously honours the women and unsettles the viewer. At the end of the video, the names of nearly five hundred women are listed,

[44] Emma Alexander and Edith Regier, "Speaking Out on Violence and Social Change: Transmedia Storytelling with Remotely Situated Women in Nepal and Canada," *Canadian Theatre Review*, 148 (2011): 41.

underscoring the gravity of the issue. Jackie Traverse had the original idea for the video. She is an Ojibway artist from Lake St. Martin, First Nations, and began to visit Crossing Communities after getting out of prison in the late 1990s. She was one of the first participants and unlike most of the others, she already considered herself to be an artist when she began. Since then, she has completed a Fine Arts degree from the University of Manitoba, and exhibits her artwork in Winnipeg and across the country. She has also become a mentor to other artists. Traverse spoke with me about making *Butterfly,* and the political awareness that it inspired in her:

> I wanted to honour the women through the butterfly, and show my anger and frustration. I remember that Chief Dan George [a chief of the Tsleil-Waututh Nation, and an author, poet and Academy Award-nominated actor] once told his granddaughter who wasn't feeling pretty that she was a caterpillar, and that one day she would turn into a beautiful butterfly. I also read a legend that says if you catch a butterfly and whisper to it and set it free, it will carry your wish to the creator, so that related to my wish that these women would not be forgotten, and that their murders will be solved. I had never seen anything on missing and murdered women before then, and I started noticing what was going on and becoming frustrated with seeing the cases go cold.[45]

Traverse has become involved with groups in Winnipeg that organize around the issue of missing and murdered women, and has designed posters and donated her paintings to help raise money and awareness.

Butterfly also held special significance for Pat Aylesworth, who like Traverse, was a participant at Crossing Communities from the beginning. After getting out of prison, Aylesworth visited Crossing Communities regularly. She had previous training in graphic design, but developed an interest in video through Crossing Communities and eventually became employed by the organization as a video editor. I discussed *Butterfly* with Aylesworth, and she told me about the conversations that contributed to the work:

[45] Jackie Traverse, interview with the author, 19 June 2012.

> The participants were thinking about the way that aboriginal women were being killed and dumped places in the city, and thinking about what was happening in Vancouver with Robert Pickton. One participant talked about an experience that she had with a john, and told us that her sister had disappeared.[46, 47]

The video was screened at the Winnipeg Aboriginal Film Festival in 2008, and was accompanied by a drum circle and an audience discussion. Aylesworth was enthusiastic about the impact that *Butterfly* had on the public:

> It was a big success in terms of how many people came, and in terms of what it was all about. All this media attention happened afterwards, and there was a police tactic that was established. On February fourteenth of that year there was a march for missing women. You have something like that happen and then people start talking. It was really empowering for the women who have had shitty things happen to them, for women who were beaten up by johns, or beaten up by their partners.[48]

Aylesworth's focus on empowerment is significant, and so is the wider setting she discusses in terms of the screening of the work. *Butterfly* contributed to the growing awareness of missing and murdered women across Canada, and its significance has reached outwards from the community that created it to a larger public concerned with the issue. However, Traverse was not completely satisfied with the video, because she felt that her original idea was taken from her and manipulated into something different. She told me that certain aspects of Crossing Communities made her deeply uncomfortable, including Regier's tendency to privilege artwork by participants that dealt with emotional trauma. Traverse was also disturbed by a dispute over ownership of the *Butterfly* video, an issue that I address in the third section of this thesis.

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[46] Pat Aylesworth, interview with the author, 27 August 2011.
[47] Robert Pickton is a former pig farmer currently serving a life sentence for the murder of six women. He is suspected of killing almost fifty women, many of them prostitutes and drug users from Vancouver's East Side. Much has been written about the failure of the RCMP to stop Pickton sooner. See "The murdered women of Vancouver deserve Dignity," *The Globe and Mail,* November 4, 2011.
[48] Aylesworth, interview.

Discussions by Lacy, Kester and Stevens regarding new genre public art and activism bring added meaning to works like *Passing Pictures with Prisoners* and *Butterfly.* Both projects are valuable in themselves, but they take on further cultural significance when one considers the process behind their making, the discussions that accompanied their public presentation, and the actions inspired by these discussions. The two projects illustrate key aspects of new genre public art. *Passing Pictures* revolved around dialogue between women coming from different social backgrounds. *Butterfly* became part of a larger discussion about missing and murdered women, coexisting alongside other activist projects. Both projects exist in the untidy aesthetic space of community and interpersonal relationships that Kester described in *The One and The Many.* It is therefore not surprising that each project raises important questions related to new genre public art, regarding the hierarchies that inevitably arise, the role of the individual within the larger community, and the issue of ownership and cultural property. These issues will be addressed in the next two sections.

SECTION 2

The Feminist Politics of Crossing Communities

Many artists and authors (including Suzanne Lacy, Lucy Lippard, Arlene Raven, and Suzy Gablik) have pointed out that new genre public art has roots in feminist art and activism of the 1970s. In her essay "Word of Honor," Arlene Raven describes the "feminist community" that emerged in Los Angeles in the 1970s. She writes, "we were women. We were art professionals. We shared a sense of social justice. We believed in the possibility of social change."[49] Reflecting on her experiences from the perspective of the 1990s, Raven suggests that the idea of community was seductive for women in the 1970s, and that problems emerged when associated notions of unity were taken too far. She writes that community-based art projects now involve "a fuller celebration of diversity [that] includes marginalized voices not audible twenty years ago."[50] Raven's essay corresponds with writing by other critics who have described the "waves" of feminism and have critiqued essentialist modes of thought associated with the second-wave. Amelia Jones writes that while feminism in the 1970s united women behind a common cause, it also had disadvantages: "it enacted the same kind of damaging universalizing logic that had excluded women from dominant cultural activities in the first place."[51] Through its various projects, Crossing Communities has placed emphasis on the strength and feeling of belonging that come from community, linking it to what Jones refers to as the "coalitional identity politics" of the 1970s. However, the project differs in two senses. First, in the sense that the community formed through the project was not a coherent, unified or peaceful whole. Second, in that Crossing Communities has worked to explore the meaning of difference throughout the past

[49] Arlene Raven, "Word of Honor," in *Mapping the Terrain,* 163.
[50] Ibid, 165.
[51] Amelia Jones, ed., *The Feminism and Visual Culture Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2003): 116.

decade. It has fostered relationships between women who come from different backgrounds, and has facilitated exchanges of ideas and knowledge across sociocultural divides on both local and global scales.

Crossing Communities grew out of the feminist activism of MAWA (Mentoring Artists for Women's Art). As I have mentioned, the initial exchanges of artwork organized by Regier came out of a mentorship she was involved in through MAWA. Regier has emphasized the importance of this organization as a model for Crossing Communities. In the preface for *Passing Pictures with Prisoners* she writes, "these projects are rooted in the philosophy of Mentoring Artists for Women's Art and owe their past and present forms to all of the artists who have worked to build that organization."[52] MAWA began as an initiative of the Women's Committee of Plug In Institute of Contemporary Art (which was then called Plug In Gallery). The group, which formed in 1984, felt that opportunities for women were lacking in the arts community, and that this situation should be redressed. In *MAWA: Culture of Community* (2004), former director Vera Lemecha writes that the mandate of the organization was to "encourage and support the intellectual and creative development of women in the visual arts by providing an ongoing forum for critical dialogue and information."[53] The model of the organization is based on the idea that "mentorship, as a non-hierarchical, peer-based system of learning, is key to passing information, experience and confidence down from one generation of women artists to another, strengthening both artists simultaneously."[54]

Passing Pictures with Prisoners adopted MAWA's mentorship model and involved several women who had been mentoring artists there. The prison exchanges demonstrate the

[52] Regier, *Passing Pictures with Prisoners,* 5.
[53] Vera Lemecha, ed., *MAWA: Culture of Community* (Winnipeg: Mentoring Artists for Women's Art, 2004), 6.
[54] "History," website for Mentoring Artists for Women's Art, accessed November 14, 2011, http://mawa.ca/about-us/history/.

ideals of MAWA in several ways. Regier has emphasized that the relationships between artists and prisoners were not hierarchical, and that the aim was not to educate the women or critique the work being made. However, the differences between the mentorship model established at MAWA and the artist-prisoner exchanges must be acknowledged. At MAWA, women are paired up with mentors to further their art practices and increase their opportunities in the arts community. Within the prison exchange project, most of the women did not initially consider themselves to be artists (although this changed as Crossing Communities grew). The aim of the project was not to further the professional careers of the women through making art with a mentor, but instead, to create an outlet for self-expression—to communicate through words, images, and objects.

MAWA continued to influence the structure of Crossing Communities, even after it was established as an official non-profit organization in 2001. While the *Passing Pictures with Prisoners* exchanges had targeted an already existing community that had few opportunities for self-expression, Crossing Communities (like MAWA) was envisioned as a way to build community through art. Its projects have gone much deeper than the prison exchanges in exploring collaboration and artistic practice. The focus shifted toward women who had recently been released from prison or who had conditional sentences. Studio space and resources for making art were available to Crossing Communities participants. Artists in residence facilitated collaborative works in a variety of media and acted as mentoring artists, with MAWA's mentorship program as a model.

Crossing Communities has integrated the feminist principles of MAWA into its structure through a focus on non-hierarchical mentoring relationships, which help to build community and facilitate dialogue between women. As well as the structure of the organization, it is worth

looking deeper at two projects carried out by participants, which bring up issues of representation, marginalization, and agency. The project *Women and Girls in the Sex Trade* (2005), was funded in part by Status of Women Canada.[55] It involved seven participants: Alexus, Charlene, J.D., i-lay-a, Sandra, Roseanne and Tonya, who were mentored by Shawna Dempsey, Lorri Millan, and Erika Macpherson. As mentors, Dempsey and Millan brought a wealth of experience in making performance art and in asking questions about gender and performativity. The participants wrote and directed videos about their experiences as sex workers. Many of the videos feature the women walking around downtown Winnipeg, reenacting a typical night on the street, and telling stories about their lives. Tonya's video examines the intersection of this identity with her experiences of motherhood, and how she feels compromised by addictions that she cannot control. In Alexus' video, she examines her two-spirited identity by juxtaposing archival photographs with shots of herself in glamorous attire. Several scenes are shot in front of the statue of Louis Riel that sits on the grounds of the Manitoba Legislature Building (fig. 14). These scenes reference the artist's Métis heritage, but may also be seen as a nod to Riel's status as a rebellious historical figure. Many of the videos revolve around stories of violence and addiction, yet there are several that are more positive and conclude with the woman leaving the sex trade.

Watching these videos gives me an uneasy feeling, in part because of the difficult topic being discussed, but also because of the voyeurism that I perceive as a risk in viewing this work. These are women whose lives are very different from my own, and I cannot truly comprehend what they have experienced. What I am aware of, though, is the courage that it must have taken to turn the camera on themselves, and how this demonstrates a need for connection with others.

[55] Status of Women Canada has been incapacitated by the Harper Government through repeated funding cuts. See Jen Skerritt, "Low-income women, children hit hardest," *Winnipeg Free Press,* October 5, 2006.

This project can be contrasted with countless representations of prostitutes throughout the history of art in which women are shown as passive and helpless. One example is discussed in British filmmaker and writer Pratibha Parmar's essay, "Hateful Contraries," in which she examines a series of photographs of prostitutes taken by Mary Ellen Mark in Bombay in 1981 (fig. 15). For Parmar, these works exemplify western voyeurism: they are sexualized and exoticized representations of the "other" and were often taken without permission. She writes that the photographs "raise pertinent questions about representations of oppressed groups by those in positions of power and control."[56] *Women and Girls in the Sex Trade* also raises these questions, but it does so in a way that counters the notion that the subjects are submissive and lacking in agency. While the videos made by participants deal with painful memories, it is also clear that the experience was enjoyable, and perhaps even cathartic. As both the directors and the subjects, the women took an active role in making the work. It was their choice to make a video dealing with this issue, and they decided how to portray themselves, which sites to visit, and which memories to retell.

The active role of the participants in making the video detracts from its voyeuristic potential. Instead of being caught off guard in compromising situations, women perform part of their identity in a fully conscious and self-aware manner. The context in which the video was initially shown also works against the threat of voyeurism. I was alone in my living room when I watched *Women and Girls in the Sex Trade,* which contributed to my feelings of unease. It would have been much different to see the video when it was screened at a public forum in 2005, followed by discussion between participants and audience members. According to Regier, hundreds of people were present and took part in the discussion, including front line social workers and aboriginal elders. Winnipeg art critic Kendra Ballingall writes, "by promoting

[56] Pratibha Parmar, "Hateful Contraries," in *The Feminism and Visual Culture Reader,* 291.

thorough discussion between the directors/subjects and the audience after the screening, the event challenged the usual power relations between the viewer and the viewed. Through self-representation, the directors stepped closer to controlling their own lives, work and public images."[57] *Women and Girls in the Sex Trade* has been screened in many different contexts, and has facilitated discussions among individuals who might not otherwise have met. It brought awareness and attention to an issue important to the participants of Crossing Communities, and enabled women to become stronger by sharing with each other. The video was created through un-hierarchical mentorships, and its emphasis on active participation was a means of countering the unequal power relations that often lie behind representations of marginalized individuals.

Another project, *Pictures of Self Harm,* connected the local concerns of Crossing Communities with global concerns regarding women's rights. *Pictures of Self Harm* is a 2008 documentary video made by several participants, including Darcie Hall and Pat Aylesworth (fig. 16). The video was filmed over a period of five years and involved "artists, sociologists, prison guards, the Elizabeth Fry Society, medical practitioners, and women who self-harm."[58] According to Regier, self harm had come up often in group discussions. This reflects the high rates of self harm among women who have been in conflict with the law. A British study notes that one-half of female prisoners they surveyed had self harmed, twice as many as the men they surveyed.[59] A 2001 study titled "Prairie Women, Violence and Self Harm" pointed out that fifty nine percent of women in Canadian prisons had self harmed.[60] The issue was at its worst

[57] Kendra Ballingall, "Trying to Exit: Women in the sex trade present seven new videos," *The Manitoban,* 93.10 (2005).
[58] "Pictures of Self Harm," website for the Crossing Communities Art Project, accessed November 14, 2011, www.crossingcommunities.org.
[59] "Self Harm," Study commissioned by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence, published by the British Psychological Society, London, 2004.
[60] Cathy Fillmore and Colleen Anne Dell, *Prairie Women, Violence and Self Harm* (Winnipeg: Elizabeth Fry Society of Manitoba, 2001), 17.

between 1988 and 1991, when six aboriginal women at the Prison for Women in Kingston, Ontario committed suicide.[61]

In *Pictures of Self Harm,* the women used video cameras to portray themselves and reflect on the issue. Cutting, overdosing and staying in abusive relationships are all noted by Hall as potential modes of self harm, who cut herself as a way of releasing emotional pain. In the video, she discusses visiting Crossing Communities and learning to make art to deal with this pain: "some of my thinking, sometimes, would be to get the bad blood out of me. Clean myself out. It was what I needed to do to get by. Once I came to this program, I met lots of people, and I've had lots of people standing by me."[62] She talks about meeting other women in similar situations, and how these relationships helped her to temporarily stop cutting. Many of the scenes involve Hall and Aylesworth walking around downtown Winnipeg and asking passersby about their awareness of self harm. Hall does most of the talking, while the video is shot by Aylesworth.

Sadly, Hall committed suicide shortly after the video was completed. Her death deeply affected those who had known her and those who believed that Crossing Communities had helped her. It brought up the limitations of a community-based art project, which was never intended to act as therapy or replace other social services. Speaking up about this, several participants have commented on the lack of mental health resources at Crossing Communities, and suggested that one of its failures was its inability to help individuals experiencing trauma. According to Pat Aylesworth:

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[61] As well as the suicides, the Kingston Prison for Women was the site of a riot in 1994. Following these events, Justice Louise Arbour released a scathing report of the Canadian Justice System. She cited numerous systemic problems and described the treatment of women in the prison as cruel and degrading. See The Arbour Report, *Commission of Inquiry into Certain Events at the Prison for Women in Kingston* (Ottawa: Public Works and Government Services Canada, 1996).

[62] Darcie Hall in *Pictures of Self Harm,* Crossing Communities Art Project, video, 2008.

> We just didn't have enough supports. It was an art space, but we didn't have enough supports in terms of the needs of people who were using the services and participating. I think that was its downfall, is that we just didn't have the capacity to deal with people's needs that were beyond our control.[63]

Hall was unable to overcome her mental health issues. However, by documenting and sharing her experiences through video, other women were able to see her as a reflection of themselves. I attended the 2008 premiere of *Pictures of Self Harm* at the Winnipeg Art Gallery, which was followed by a lengthy discussion between participants and audience members. Individuals of all ages stood up and shared personal stories of self harm. I was struck by the diverse ages and backgrounds of those who spoke, although most were women. The event made me think of friends and family members who have been in similar situations. Caring for them, listening, and being emotionally present have made me deeply aware of the relationship networks that are necessary to overcome individual pain and suffering. Crossing Communities was part of this network for many women, and while it was not the solution to their problems, it became both an outlet and a lifeline.

In addition to the Winnipeg screening, the video was shown to a very different audience when Regier and other members of Crossing Communities traveled to Nepal in 2009 to make videos with members of the Women Foundation of Nepal. In addition to *Pictures of Self Harm,* the video *Empty* was screened. In *Empty,* Jackie Traverse discusses her mother's alcoholism and its destructive effects on their relationship. In stop-motion animation, Traverse illustrates her family's relocation from Lake St. Martin, Manitoba, to Winnipeg. A painting of a mother and child gives way to a woman drinking (fig. 17). The project in Nepal was a way for aboriginal women from Winnipeg to share these experiences with Nepali women dealing with similar

[63] Pat Aylesworth, interview.

issues. The video screening event brought together women from different caste backgrounds to talk about domestic violence, drug use, prostitution and alcoholism. In "Transmedia Storytelling," Edith Regier and Emma Alexander note that "when we screened *Empty* in our workshop in Nepal, the Nepali women empathized with Jackie's experience of loss and said they had no idea that women in Canada struggle with alcoholism or that not all women in Canada have easy lives."[64] One Nepali woman, Rita Shrestha, made a video in response to the two that were screened. She titled her video *From White to Red,* referring to the white sari that women must wear after the death of their husbands (fig. 18). Women who wear the white sari are seen as bad omens. They are often the victims of unwanted advances because they are visible as single, yet sexually experienced females. Shrestha recounts, "the men on public transportation harassed me."[65] Wearing white and walking slowly towards the camera, she unwraps her sari to reveal a red one underneath, as she applies bright red lipstick.

According to Alexander and Regier, the video caused controversy when it was publicly screened in Kathmandu: "a young educated woman became very angry that Rita (who is uneducated and from a lower caste) dared to wear a red sari now and accused her of violating the traditions that women are charged to uphold."[66] While one might see Shrestha's red sari and lipstick as simply conforming to a different (western influenced) model of ideal womanhood, I would argue that in breaking with expectations of gender and class, she demonstrates a significant amount of strength and agency. As with *Women and Girls in the Sex Trade,* the subject directed her own story and retained control over the aesthetic and narrative of the video, thereby representing herself.

[64] Alexander and Regier, 39.
[65] Rita Shrestha in *From White to Red,* Crossing Communities Art Project, video, 2009.
[66] Alexander and Regier, 39.

As numerous postcolonial feminists have pointed out, many non-western women consider cultural tradition and feminism to be irreconcilable. The woman who commented on Shrestha's video saw her action to be one of cultural betrayal, instead of gendered liberation. Verna St. Denis, a Cree Métis professor at the University of Saskatchewan, writes about such conflicts between feminism and cultural tradition in "Feminism is for Everybody" (2007). Like other feminist critics, she acknowledges the limitations of second-wave feminist thinking, noting that many aboriginal women have understood feminism as "not only irrelevant but also racist and colonial."[67] St. Denis argues that aboriginal women who identify with feminist politics risk being seen as "assimilated," and as having given up their traditional values. However, this mode of thinking does not acknowledge the multiple positions that women occupy. For St. Denis, becoming familiar with work by women artists and writers of colour (including Audre Lorde and bell hooks) changed her opinion on the place of feminism within cultural tradition. She writes, "I once thought that to be feminist meant that one had to choose between gender and culture or nation. I no longer hold this view. Increasingly more Aboriginal women are beginning to identify as feminists, or at least with some of the goals of feminism, such as ending violence against women and children."[68] St. Denis' emphasis on the intersectionality of identity, and on the multiple positions that women occupy, is significant to my discussion of Crossing Communities as a feminist organization. The organization has stressed the importance of communal bonds, which grew out of MAWA's feminist politics. However, Crossing Communities has also embraced difference and intersectionality. The Nepal video project built community between women across cultures and geographical distances, and it highlighted conflicting attitudes towards culture, gender and identity, which were presented for public discussion and debate.

[67] Verna St. Denis, "Feminism is For Everybody: Aboriginal Women, Feminism and Diversity," in *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism*, ed. J. Green (Halifax: Fernwood Press, 2007): 33-52.
[68] Ibid.

In addition to the dialogues that were created, the Nepal project brings up several critiques of community-based art that relate to feminism. In *One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (2002) Miwon Kwon critiques several projects in which communities were assumed to possess a mythic unity (including women and African Americans). She asks, "in actual practice, how does a group of people become identified as a community in an exhibition program? Who identifies them as such? Who decides what social issues will be redressed through them?"[69] Kwon's critique of mythic unity implies that notions of coherent community are essentializing, in much the same way that both Jones and St. Denis criticized second-wave feminism for lumping "women" into one universal category, and ignoring the multiple and intersecting ways in which individuals experience identity and oppression.

Grant Kester responds to this argument in *Conversation Pieces,* arguing that "instead of dismissing the notion of politically coherent communities outright, it is worth considering the political fulcrum provided by collective identities and voices in social struggles."[70] In the Nepal project, communal bonds were formed through shared experiences of domestic violence and self-harm, and not just through identity. Kester's discussion of collective identities is important for any artist working with communities to consider, especially when the goal is to change society. He first articulated this idea in his 1995 essay, "Aesthetic Evangelists":

> The politically coherent community can come into existence almost anywhere there are individuals (women welfare recipients, prisoners, etc.) who have struggled to identify their common interests (and common enemies) over and against a social system that is dedicated to denying the existence of systematic forms of oppression. This is not to say that these communities are monolithic, rather, their existence and operation is characterized by an ongoing process of exchange and debate within and among individuals who have typically been spoken for, managed, regulated, represented and

[69] Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 116.
[70] Grant Kester, *Conversation Pieces,* 163.

> frequently demonized by outsiders located in positions of ideological and institutional authority.[71]

His argument is related to Gayatri Spivak's discussion of "strategic essentialism," which preserves the heterogeneity of an oppressed group at the same time that it allows them to act together and make political demands. Lemecha employed a version of this concept in her discussion of MAWA, writing that "community is a site where we share values, rituals and conventions with others; it also refers to a group of individuals with certain shared ideals."[72] The collaborative working methods of Crossing Communities fostered a model of artistic creation that recognized multiple identities and focused on the specificities of women's everyday lives. Crossing Communities' work in Nepal encouraged collaboration between women in different geographical locations, and recognized that similar experiences of oppression could strengthen those bonds and provide a "political fulcrum."

This section has discussed the important role that feminism played in the development of Crossing Communities as an organization. Structurally, it was influenced by the mentorship model developed through MAWA, which itself is linked to feminist political activism of the 1970s. The unifying aspects of communities, especially those that may be described as politically coherent, have been critiqued by many authors, including Jones and Kwon. However, other critics, including Spivak and Kester, have noted that communities may use coherency in an instrumental manner that strengthens their political clout without resulting in a homogenous unit. This is important to feminist critics like St. Denis, for whom the different parts of one's identity are always experienced simultaneously and not separately. As well as looking at how Crossing Communities is structured, my examination of *Women and Girls in the Sex Trade* and *Pictures of*

[71] Grant Kester, "Aesthetic Evangelists: Conversion and Empowerment in Contemporary Community Art," *Afterimage,* 22 (January 1995): 5-11.
[72] Lemecha, 7.

Self Harm has underscored the complexity behind discussions of gender, identity and art. I build on these ideas in the next section, and look at how power relations are influenced by cultural and colonial histories.

SECTION 3

New Genre Public Art and Subaltern Voices

One of the main critiques of new genre public art is that artists who engage with marginalized communities are actually exploiting them to further their own practices. In "The Artist as Ethnographer" (1996), Hal Foster points out that community-based art often involves a white artist working with members of a different racial community who are presumed by the artist to have access to experiences of alterity. The artists who associate with these communities are viewed as radical or avant-garde because of their proximity to otherness. Foster describes this position as "primitivist fantasy," in which the other is assumed to have special access to "primary psychic and social processes from which the white subject is somehow blocked."[73] He addresses politically engaged contemporary art that adheres to this anthropological model of working, pointing out that the sites of art have changed to include social issues such as AIDS or homelessness. Foster begins his essay by referring to Walter Benjamin's essay "The Author as Producer," (1934) which argued that artists must side with the proletariat in terms of material practice in order to intervene in the means of artistic production. It was not enough to make art alongside the worker; for Benjamin, it was necessary to overthrow bourgeois art and culture completely, or else risk "an ideological patronage that positioned the worker as passive other."[74] Foster relates this idea to tendencies within postmodern culture, suggesting that contemporary artists working with communities now wish to identify with the cultural other rather than the worker or proletariat, and that the experiences of these individuals or groups are viewed as somehow more real.

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[73] Hal Foster, "The Artist as Ethnographer," in *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996): 175.
[74] Ibid, 172.

Foster's concerns relate to Gayatri Spivak's writing on the subaltern. Subaltern means "inferior rank," and was first used by Antonio Gramsci in his prison notebooks to refer to groups subject to the hegemony of the dominant classes. In the 1980s, the term was adopted by the Subaltern Studies Group, who used it to explore postcolonial struggles in South Asia. I use the term in this thesis because it acknowledges the history of colonial oppression that continues to affect the geography and culture of Winnipeg. Spivak writes that "in post-colonial terms, everything that has limited or no access to the cultural imperialism is subaltern—a space of difference."[75] Regier cites Spivak's essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in the introduction to *Passing Pictures with Prisoners*. Spivak's essay suggested that the subaltern could not speak, since by attempting to do so it would necessarily adopt the voice of imperialism and western domination.[76] Regier points out that interacting with the subaltern can be complicated: "whether the subaltern is the widow forced to commit suicide in Hindu ritual or the woman prisoner who responds to submission with self-harm, the method used to engage their voices also risks perpetuating their subordination."[77] However, she believes that new genre public art allows the artist working with marginalized communities ways around the subaltern trap, through an emphasis on listening, empathy and "ideas of a multiple self expressed through dialogue."[78] In a 1992 interview, Spivak was asked how one could work with the subaltern, and her response holds implications for community-based art: "you don't give the subaltern voice. You work *for* the bloody subaltern, you work against subalternity."[79]

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[75] Leon de Kock, "Interview with Gayatri Spivak: New Nation Writers Conference in South Africa," *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature*, 23.3 (1992): 46.
[76] Gayatri Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1988): 271-313.
[77] Regier, *Passing Pictures with Prisoners,* 22.
[78] Ibid.
[79] De Kock, 46.

Texts by Foster and Spivak bring up problematic aspects of collaborations with individuals positioned as subaltern within society. Two contrasting examples demonstrate different ways in which subaltern voices have been engaged in community-based art. In the essay "Aesthetic Evangelists" (1995), Grant Kester examines an exhibition by artist Dawn Dedeaux in New Orleans in 1993 titled *Soul Shadows: Urban Warrior Myths*. The exhibition was the result of Dedeaux's investigations into the lives of male prisoners, the majority of whom were black (Dedeaux is white), and grew out of an artist-in-prisons project that Dedeaux was working on in New Orleans. Like Regier, Dedeaux made art with prisoners in a variety of media for several months. Unlike Regier, however, Dedeaux did not attempt to connect the experiences of individuals to larger political issues associated with poverty, crime and the justice system. Kester writes that Dedeaux was attempting to be "an artist/social-worker; an exemplary subject who could expose the incarcerated to the healing power of the aesthetic through proximity and example."[80] Kester highlights the authenticity, realness and alterity associated with poverty and crime in this project. He also points out the "narrative cycle of personal redemption" that the exhibition construed.[81] The inmates' art reflected on feelings of guilt and remorse at having committed their crimes, and expressed their desire to change and reenter society. No attention was given by Dedeaux to the fact that crime and violence are linked to poverty and systemic racism against black people in the United States.

Kwon highlights a different approach to community-based art in *One Place After Another.* While she is critical of many of the projects that she discusses, there are several that she regards highly, including Iñigo Manglano-Ovalle's contribution to the Culture in Action exhibition program that took place in Chicago in 1993. Manglano-Ovalle's project involved

[80] Kester, "Aesthetic Evangelists," 27.
[81] Ibid.

networking within his own (predominantly latino) neighbourhood to create an organization called Street-Level Video. The artist helped to establish a video collective with former gang members, and the group made videos about gangs, as well as other topics, including gentrification of their neighbourhood (fig. 19). For Culture in Action, the group organized a block party and displayed their videos on the street (similar to Suzanne Lacy's *Code 33* and the public screenings of videos by Crossing Communities). According to critic Laurie Palmer, Street-Level Video "began a process of putting the means of production into the hands of urban youth to counter media hype through self-representation."[82] Kwon writes that its success came from Manglano-Ovalle's intimate and direct knowledge of the neighbourhood he worked and lived in. As well, the project was established with the belief that it would outlast Culture in Action, and it continues to operate. On the project's website, it states:

> Our staff members are both artists and mentors who lead Street-Level's young people through formal artistic training in the media arts and help them process what they see and hear in the world around them—whether it is on TV, the Internet, in their homes, the movies, or on the streets. Using these tools, young artists address personal and community issues such as violence, family matters, racism, gentrification, and history. They learn that art is a potent medium for expression, capable of initiating positive personal and community change.[83]

To me, this sounds remarkably like the working process at Crossing Communities, which was also conceived of as a long-lasting project that would build community. In contrast to Dedeaux, projects carried out by Regier and Manglano-Ovalle have addressed the structural causes of crime by engaging marginalized groups in cultural production and self-representation. By doing so, they respond to Spivak's call to work against subalternity.

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[82] Laurie Palmer, "Iñigo Manglano-Ovalle," *Frieze* 27 (March/April 1996): 71.
[83] "History," website for Street-Level Youth Media, accessed November 14, 2011, http://www.street-level.org/About/history.html.

It is worth noting that Regier has responded to critiques of new genre public art made by Foster and Kester. In an article titled "Provisional Routes," she argues that "to assume that we are working with a population that is about to be paternalized is to miss the mark."[84] She acknowledges the challenges of working with marginalized communities, and cites a passage from Lucy Lippard's essay in *Mapping the Terrain:* "we need to collaborate with those whose backgrounds and maybe foregrounds are unfamiliar to us, rejecting the insidious notions of 'diversity' that simply neutralize difference. Empathy and exchange are key words."[85] Caroline Stevens has also responded to the assertion that artists working with communities are paternalistic and self-aggrandizing. She addresses Hal Foster's notion of the artist as ethnographer, writing that his argument "serves to remove agency from so-called marginalized groups when they are indeed the participants in such practices."[86] While I believe that it is important to think critically about the power relationships at work in community-based art, I agree with Stevens. To assume that the participants in such projects are merely passive recipients of "aesthetic evangelism" is paternalistic in itself. The participants in Crossing Communities may have come to the program with little knowledge of art, but they possessed a demonstrated awareness of visual culture and a desire to manipulate media in order to control representations of themselves and speak out about their experiences of oppression.

In Winnipeg and in Canada, the history of colonialism has positioned aboriginal people as subaltern, and has worked to marginalize them through physical and structural violence. When Regier began working at the Portage Correctional Centre, she realized that the majority of women in prison were aboriginal, as were a large number of the women who later participated in

[84] Edith Regier, "Provisional Routes—Cultural Navigations Through Sites Of Criminalization," *Off-The-Radar: 31 Funded Projects and Essays*, Canada Council for the Arts, 2004, accessed June 30, 2011, available at http://www.canadacouncil.ca/interarts/ym127519225806062500.htm.
[85] Lippard, 128.
[86] Stevens, 15.

Crossing Communities. University of Saskatchewan professor Colleen Anne Dell, who has worked with the Elizabeth Fry Society, has written about the criminalization of aboriginal women. She cites several studies underscoring the disproportionate number of aboriginal people in prison in Canada. In Manitoba, Aboriginal women make up fourteen percent of the population and eighty percent of the female jail population. This statistic is higher than the Canadian average (two percent and thirty-five percent, respectively).[87] Dell points out that while studies have highlighted these statistics, they often leave out the reasons behind them, and there is a lack of scholarship on criminalization and its roots in the intersections of race, gender and class. The many aboriginal women who became involved with Crossing Communities necessitated in Regier an awareness of cultural issues. She has stated that her emphasis as an artistic director has always been on listening and learning: "I've worked with elders, taken part in healing ceremonies, just really focused on learning. This was in much the same way that we approached women in Nepal. We ask basic questions: who are you, where do you live, what's important to you."[88] Regier has provided resources for aboriginal women to make art in a manner that acknowledges their cultural background, but does not confine them within the boundaries of tradition.

As I have mentioned, Crossing Communities exists in a space between organization and art practice. It has maintained this flexibility throughout its duration.[89] While the structure, or

[87] Colleen Anne Dell, "The Criminalization of Aboriginal Women: Commentary by a Community Activist," in *Crimes of Colour: Racialization and the Criminal Justice System in Canada*, ed. Wendy Chan and Kiran Mirchandani (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2002), 128.
[88] Edith Regier, interview.
[89] The ambiguous nature of the project has meant that it has never been eligible for core funding. Instead, it relies on project funding, which it has received at provincial and federal levels. Canada Council for the Arts has many different funding categories. Many arts organizations, including museums, galleries, and artist run centres, are eligible for core funding, which begins at $20,000, with no upward limit on the amount that can be requested. The funding assists the organization in day to day operations. One of the stipulations of this funding is that the organization must be accessible to the public. While Crossing Communities hosts public events, its studios are

lack of structure of the organization has been described as chaotic by some participants, it has also meant that the projects can respond to the interests of participants at any given time. According to Pat Aylesworth, "the unstructured nature of it is what made people that participated get really involved."[90] The needs and interests of the women who visited Crossing Communities determined the collaborative approach, and the artists who were hired as mentors. Métis artist Rosalie Favell has mentored women at Crossing Communities since 2001. Her work has explored representations of aboriginal people through both family photo albums and popular culture. For example, in her series *Plain(s) Warrior Artist,* she reconsiders Plains Ledger Art, a style invented by aboriginal tribes in the mid-nineteenth century when former means of representation (including the use of buffalo hide) disappeared due to overhunting. Along with guns, disease, and alcohol, colonization of the west introduced new ways of making images, including the accounting ledger book used by white men to keep inventories. Ledger Art was a way for individuals to record heroic acts, often related to hunting. In Favell's updated version, she positions herself as a hero in various pop culture productions. In a digital photographic collage titled, *I awoke to find my spirit had returned* (1999), she places herself in Dorothy's bed in a scene from The Wizard of Oz as Louis Riel looks in through the window (fig. 20).

Favell shared both technical and cultural knowledge with Crossing Communities participants. In one of the projects she mentored, the participants created their own photographic collages exploring culture and identity. In *I didn't know I had a reserve,* a young girl in a flowered dress stands in front of a tipi and a lake (fig. 21). In another untitled image, Jackie Traverse stands with her foot poised above the Mayflower ship (fig. 22). Her outfit combines elements of tradition (long braids and eagle feathers) with theatricality (studded top hat and

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technically not open to the public on a day to day basis—it is directed towards a specific public. The organization has therefore had to rely on smaller grants for each individual project.

[90] Pat Aylesworth, interview.

heavy mascara). She has placed herself in front of two growling bears, and stares straight into the camera. Despite the obvious photo-shopping, this is a powerful image that has been thoughtfully composed. Viewers are confronted with the intense gaze of a strong woman who crushes a symbol of colonialism under her moccasined foot.

As well as the juxtaposition of traditional and contemporary perspectives, the symbolic gesture, and the confrontational gaze, there is another notable element in this photograph. A butterfly appears to have landed on Traverse's hand, and is clearly a reference to the *Butterfly* video she had worked on around the same time this image was created. She told me that "it represents women, femininity. It's such a beautiful creature and it brings people strength."[91] The prominent display of this personal symbol adds to the sense that Traverse is in control of her self and her aesthetic. The anti-colonial nature of the collage suggests that the subaltern can certainly speak, and that shared networks of knowledge between aboriginal cultural producers enable these voices to become stronger. Traverse's image came out of a process of knowledge sharing with a Métis artist who introduced working methods tied not only to modes of art making, but to investigations of identity and family history.

Traverse's image is interesting to relate to other Crossing Communities projects. Some of the photographs, videos and performances deal with experiences of victimization, and in other pieces, the maker is shown as empowered, confident and strong. This is visible in Traverse's collage, in Alexus's contribution to *Women and Girls in the Sex Trade,* and in a photograph made by a participant in a postcard project workshop in 2010. The young aboriginal woman holds up a sign saying "RESERVED," while sitting inside a bus shelter (fig. 23). On the back, the postcard states:

[91] Jackie Traverse, interview.

> Aniin, this spot is reserved. Reservations. That is where they, yes I said they, put us! ...Honestly, it may seem harsh to say this, but reservations are hell on earth. There is no running water on my reserve, no programs for youth to be involved in, no store...no job opportunities - so people are forced to go on welfare...My people should be treated equally they are not animals they should be able to have a shower when they want, have a drink of clean water when they want...Think your life's tough? Wish you were here! But this spot is reserved!![92]

These works were made by individuals who are marginalized by hegemonic and centring systemic processes. It may be argued that using this language reaffirms the oppressed status of participants, yet as Kester and Spivak have both argued, a shared position of marginality can also be a means of resistance. It is important, however, that the question that comes out of this discussion is not solely, who are the subaltern and how can they be helped? But instead, who or what is responsible for oppression, and how does one locate and—as Traverse proposes through her collage—crush them? Her moccasined foot, poised in mid-air, shows me exactly where to locate the source of oppression. The collage she created and the workshop through which it was produced should be seen as a critique of the structural violence of colonialism, and an assertion of cultural agency.

Traverse's participation in Crossing Communities also provokes questions about cross-cultural collaboration. Following her involvement with Crossing Communities, she has increasingly exhibited and sold her artwork. In 2011, her video *Butterfly* was included in the multi-venue exhibition, *Close Encounters: The Next 500 Years,* and she was included in the exhibition *Frontrunners: Past, Present and Future* at Urban Shaman and Plug In Institute of Contemporary Art. *Frontrunners* focused on the Professional Native Artists Inc., also known as the "Indian Group of Seven," which formed in 1973 in Winnipeg and included Daphne Odjig, Jackson Beardy, Norval Morrisseau, Carl Ray, Joseph Sanchez, Eddy Cobiness and Alex

[92] Unknown artist and Crossing Communities, postcard, 2008.

Janvier.[93] The exhibition included works by these artists as well as contemporary artists inspired by their work, including Traverse, Darryl Nepinak, Lita Fontaine and Louis Ogemah. Traverse's success as an individual artist raises questions about the collaborative artwork created through Crossing Communities. Traverse benefited from the resources available through Crossing Communities, and the relationships that developed between mentors and other participants. In the end, however, she was more interested in making her own work than in participating in a new genre public art project. While her departure may be seen as a disavowal of collaborative working methods, it can also be understood more positively as a means of asserting aboriginal identity and intervening in colonial discourse.

This section has examined the subaltern voice within new genre public art, and addressed several Crossing Communities projects that confront colonial oppression. While Traverse ultimately decided to make art on her own, she contributed a significant amount to Crossing Communities. The videos *Butterfly* and *Empty* both enabled personal experience to connect with larger issues of colonialism affecting aboriginal people. Similarly, digital photography projects mentored by Rosalie Favell encouraged participants to draw from family history and cultural tradition, and these projects became a statement of resistance linking histories of colonialism to the present. Regier returned to the concept of the subaltern in a 2011 essay titled "Transmedia Storytelling," in which she writes that "in the 1990s, *Passing Pictures with Prisoners* was questioning if the subaltern woman could speak and be heard, by the early 2000s we knew she could."[94] Regier's words, as well as the artworks I have discussed, illustrate Spivak's call to work against subalternity. Instead of giving participants a voice, Crossing Communities

[93] See Joseph Sanchez, "The Indian Group of Seven - The formation of Professional Native Artists, Inc.," In *Selected Proceedings of Witness: A Symposium on the Woodland School of Painters,* ed. Bonnie Devine (Sudbury, Ontario: Aboriginal Curatorial Collective and Witness, 2007): 20-35. Available online at www.aboriginalcuratorialcollective.org, accessed January 20, 2012.
[94] Alexander and Regier, 42.

amplified already existing voices, joining them together in the struggle to dismantle patriarchal colonialism.

SECTION 4

Site-Specificity and Conflict in Winnipeg's Public Spaces

My discussion of subalternity and aboriginal self-representation leads to questions about the site of this project, and the questions that it brings up surrounding urban space—both geographic and social. While I have addressed several aspects of new genre public art, including feminism, authorship, community and cultural representation, it is also important to reflect on the specific relationship of this project to the city of Winnipeg, and the means by which the voices of this community have been inserted into the public sphere. In a 2010 special issue of *Canadian Dimension* on Winnipeg, several essays discuss the city's history of radical politics and avant-garde art, and its current social problems, including the racism and poverty that affect the city's large aboriginal population. Jim Silver writes about Winnipeg's poorest area, the North End, and the many aboriginal people who live there:

> The poverty of today's North End is experienced by many as a sense of hopelessness, of deep and dark despair. Inadequate housing, deep poverty, the prevailing crime and violence, the absence of jobs that pay a wage sufficient to support a family, have created a "spiritual" malaise among many that is particularly debilitating.[95]

Another article in the magazine looks specifically at the mythologization of the Winnipeg art scene. Ed Janzen wonders, "exactly how a city like this—with its flotillas of mosquitos, its blistering cold, its malignant racism—ever managed to turn itself into a cultural product."[96] Janzen equates attempts to promote local culture in Winnipeg with civic boosterism, and depicts artists as mouthpieces for gentrification and urban renewal. As Janzen points out, the vision of

[95] Jim Silver, "Winnipeg's North End: Yesterday and Today," *Canadian Dimension*, January 7, 2010.
[96] Ed Janzen, "The Power of Myth: How Winnipeg and Its Art Became Such a Big Deal," *Canadian Dimension*, January 7, 2010.

the city presented by artists has, to a certain degree, become aligned with the vision presented by those in business, sports and entertainment. Winnipeg's art and culture is quirky, idiosyncratic, borne of cold, isolation and boredom. Many artists have contributed to this vision. Without detracting from their work (a great deal of which I admire), I think it is worth pointing out its relationship to that divisive entity known as "creative capital," which was championed by Richard Florida in *The Rise of the Creative Class* (2002).[97] A 2011 article in the *Winnipeg Sun* commended a plan by the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce to capitalize on creativity in the downtown Exchange District, which is already home to many galleries and art studios. The goal is to enhance this space by attracting "a set target of artists, to help propel Winnipeg past other so-called cultural capitals."[98] In this plan, success is not measured by the creation of meaningful art, but as the *Winnipeg Sun* article puts it, "a creative return on investment."[99]

The obvious problem with this plan is that art and artists are treated in a completely instrumental manner. As well, gentrification is posited as purely beneficial. What is left out of this vision of the city is the fact that the creation of such successful, coherent spaces will necessitate removing or discouraging interference, including individuals who disturb the supposed peace. How have artists avoided being pawns in creative capital schemes? Janzen's essay touches upon the relationship between art and gentrification, but he does not acknowledge that some artists and artworks have indeed focused their energy on the city's spaces of chaos and conflict—the same spaces discussed by Dempsey and Millan in the catalogue for the *Subconscious City* exhibition mentioned in the introduction to this thesis.

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[97] This was acknowledged in 2011, when Winnipeg was heralded as the Cultural Capital of Canada. The title is bestowed upon a different Canadian city each year by Canadian Heritage, and the year-long programming is a chance to showcase a wide range of cultural events. These events exhibit a brand of nationalism unique to a particular urban location, and portray artists as valuable to the cultural industry and economic life of the region. The concept of creative capital was outlined by Florida in *The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life* (New York: Basic Books, 2002).

[98] "Chamber's BOLD plan to make 'Peg 'Creative Capital'" *Winnipeg Sun,* September 22, 2011.

[99] Ibid.

In Winnipeg, public art has served to beautify and commemorate, but it has also served to challenge and deconstruct urban spaces and civic discourses. There are numerous examples that might be analyzed, and they demonstrate varying levels of integration and intervention in the cityscape. In 2006, an extremely popular public sculpture program called Bears on Broadway saw decorated polar bears installed along Winnipeg boulevards (fig. 24). As Miwon Kwon has pointed out, public art once referred exclusively to this kind of artwork, which did not differ from art found inside museums in any noticeable way. Bears on Broadway relates to what she describes as integrative public art, since it exists harmoniously in its surroundings and aims solely to please.

Beginning in the 1960s, artists increasingly wanted their work to intervene, rather than integrate, into public spaces. Kwon discusses Richard Serra's *Tilted Arc* (1981) (fig. 25), a large steel wall that stretched across the Federal Plaza in New York. The piece was protested by office workers who were inconvenienced by its presence, and the piece was dismantled in 1989. Winnipeg has its own *Tilted Arc:* John Nugent's *Northern No. 1* (1976), a modernist yellow steel structure that sits outside of the Canadian Grain Commission building (fig. 26). Like *Tilted Arc,* the sculpture was detested by the building's inhabitants, who petitioned for its removal and won––although it was reinstalled in 1997, nearly twenty years after it had been removed.[100]

The sculpture of Louis Riel at the Provincial Legislature building has a similarly controversial history: an original design by Marcien Lemay and Étienne Gaboury depicted the leader of the Métis rebellion as nude and tortured, and it was removed from the Legislature grounds in favour of a more heroic portrayal (fig. 27 & 28).[101] While it was not the intention of

[100] Morley Walker, "Look again! Prairie scene really is there: Cut No. 1 Northern a swath of slack," *Winnipeg Free Press,* October 25, 1997.
[101] Shannon Bower, "'Practical Results:' The Riel Statue Controversy at the Manitoba Legislative Building," *Manitoba History* 42 (Autumn/Winter 2001-2002): 30-38.

Nugent, Lemay or Gaboury to create interventionist artworks, they functioned in that manner, provoking discussion about whether or not public art should be representative of the larger community. The works were located in a physical site but also became attached to specific discourses, including modernist art and Métis cultural history. Kwon points out that many site-specific works now function entirely by referencing a particular issue or social problem, and it is in this manner that Crossing Communities functions as a site-specific public artwork.

In thinking about public art and site-specificity, I have drawn from the comments section of the *Winnipeg Free Press,* in order to demonstrate common attitudes towards gentrification, crime and poverty. The following are comments posted online following an article published on November 4, 2011 about downtown "revitalization":

> I won't visit downtown until they get rid of all the nasties that linger around (posted by Brian_Wpg).
>
> You know, after all the scare stories I heard on here about Portage around Fort St., I was almost surprised to find a normal city corner on Tuesday. Not a pan-handler in sight, no one under the influence, and certainly no crimes in progress. Ditto around city hall. Just regular people going about their business; no demons were lurking (posted by Intangible).
>
> If you really want to spruce up the downtown, find a way to get rid of the panhandlers, drunks, and druggies. Start by closing the dive bars and hotels that attract this element to the downtown. Make Higgins a dividing line between the core and downtown/exchange areas. Perhaps a special tax on downtown bars that the good ones can afford but the bad ones can't will force the bad ones out of business. This will attract residents and shoppers, and create a more palatable night life (posted by altabnd).[102]

While I am wary of giving voice to reactionary viewpoints that abound in populist sources, I also see value in making an example of these words, and unpacking the attitudes they demonstrate

[102] Comments posted online after Murray McNeill's article "Cool new core: Unique 'funnelators' key feature in slick new vision for bustling downtown," November 4, 2011. Based on my familiarity with the *Free Press* comments section, the arguments of these authors are representative of the commonly held view that downtown Winnipeg is ugly, dangerous and in need of "sprucing up."

toward downtown Winnipeg and its inhabitants. The first two commenters express simplistic attitudes about people who are poor and/or homeless, who are described as "nasties" and "demons." Other users of downtown are referred to as "regular people going about their business." The third comment also displays a simplistic portrayal of "good" and "bad" elements in society, but touches upon a more complicated idea, that of gentrification. The third commenter privileges night-club goers over those who visit "bad" bars, and argues that a more ideal city space is possible through the exclusion of those perceived to be a threat to public safety.

An attitude similar to that of the third commenter was analyzed by Rosalyn Deutsche in *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics* (1996). Deutsche focuses on the eviction of homeless people from public parks in New York in the 1980s, which was carried out under the guise of safety. She argues that removal policies spring from a belief that public spaces are being restored to their "rightful" owners. In Deutsche's final chapter, "Agoraphobia," she references the writing of Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau to outline her own thoughts on democracy. She argues that "conflict is not something that befalls an originally, or potentially, harmonious urban space. Urban space is the product of conflict."[103] Deutsche refers to the drive for unified and coherent spaces as a masculine tendency often perpetrated by nostalgic conservatives, and she employs feminist theories of subjectivity as a means to think past conceptions of unity that imply exclusion.

Deutsche refers to conflict as an inherent quality of democracy and urban public space. Crossing Communities involves participants whose voices are often not heard in public discussions—many have literally been cast out of society. I see Crossing Communities not as a way to allow these individuals to become part of a society envisioned as whole or unified, but instead, as a way for participants to comment on social exclusions that structure democracy on

[103] Rosalyn Deutsche, *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 278.

both local and national levels. I have examined several projects that illustrate these exclusions. *Women and Girls in the Sex Trade* and *Butterfly* demonstrate the marginalization of women in the sex trade, while Traverse's self-portrait directed internalized conflict outwards, suggesting tactics of resistance against colonial oppression.

Other projects provide further examples. My discussion of public spaces, intervention, and attitudes towards gentrification in Winnipeg brings me back to the different bus rides I examined in the Introduction. It is no coincidence that buses have come up repeatedly in this thesis. Public transportation produces sites where diverse groups are confined together (like mobile prison cells), and where movement through the city provides continually changing territorial reference points. As Malcolm Miles points out in *Art, Space and the City,* "mass transit systems are locations of more informal mixing in urban society than almost anywhere else."[104] The video *Bus Stories* (2010) was introduced at the beginning of this thesis, and is worth examining in more depth (fig. 29). The piece marked a change in Crossing Communities; in the past few years, it has organized workshops with youth and immigrants as well as women. *Bus Stories* shows the interior of a Winnipeg Transit bus as it travels through the city, and narration is provided by Azim Bekkodjaev, Aaron Richard, Mitchel Richard and Cheyenne Traverse, who tell stories about riding the bus. Bekkodjaev describes being embarrassed when he did not know how to get off the bus: "here, you have to pull the yellow thing. Back home you have to yell." Cheyenne Traverse states:

> I could read people good. On the bus sometimes I see people looking at me from up and down. I could tell that they don't like me, not just me but maybe my kind, or whatever. You can just see it in their faces. One time this little old lady had her bag on the seat, and every other seat was taken. I asked her to move her bag, so nicely, and she's like, "No,

[104] Malcolm Miles, *Art, Space and the City: Public Art and Urban Futures* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 87.

> you can go sit at the back of the bus." … I was with my mom and my little sister and she kept giving us really dirty looks.[105]

The stories shared by these young people bring up the social exclusion and overt racism experienced by those positioned as other. As a Crossing Communities production, the video interrogates the term "public space," and suggests that it is characterized by conflict rather than social inclusion.

Another example that highlights site-specificity is the urban intervention *Home Sweet Home* by Pat Aylesworth (2008), which was a collaboration with MAWA and not Crossing Communities. Aylesworth retrieved a bright red couch from a dumpster and stenciled the words "Home Sweet Home" on one side and "Do Not Remove Me" on the other side. Aylesworth transported the couch to three different locations, and observed the social interactions that took place around it. First, she placed it on the front lawn of the University of Winnipeg, which has been an agent of gentrification in its downtown neighbourhood. The couch was then placed near MAWA on the corner of Main Street and Alexander, another area that is currently experiencing gentrification (which arguably includes MAWA's presence). The last stop for the couch was a few blocks south on the sidewalk in front of City Hall (fig. 30), where it was ordered to be removed after only a few hours. Art critic Vivan Belik writes, "treated no differently from a homeless person in the inner city, the couch is uprooted and relocated from the entrance of City Hall so it will not reflect poorly on the city."[106] Ironically, the City Hall photograph shows the couch placed in front of a Bears on Broadway sculpture, giving one a sense of the kind of public art deemed to be acceptable by city officials: that which does not raise difficult questions or

[105] *Bus Stories,* Crossing Communities Art Project, video, 2010.
[106] Vivian Belik, "Couched in Symbolism: An art piece stirs thoughts of home and homelessness," website for the symposium Art Building Community, accessed November 30, 2011, http://mawa.ca/artbuildingcommunity/responses/vivian_belik/index.html.

cause conflict. Although Aylesworth's public artwork was not created through Crossing Communities, the work is proof that the activism and political awareness fostered by the organization has been taken up and given new life by participants.

Conflict may be considered on several levels in relation to Crossing Communities. As well as the spatial, urban conflict I have discussed, it is also necessary to consider the conflicts that brought the women to the organization in the first place, and the internal conflicts that developed between Regier and several of the participants over the years. I have noted Aylesworth's description of Crossing Communities as unstructured and lacking the resources to support individuals with mental health issues. These comments were echoed by one anonymous participant, as well as mentoring artist Jess MacCormack. The anonymous participant told me that "Edith's intentions were good right to the end, we were just working with strong personalities and it's a juggling act out there."[107] MacCormack had several critiques of the project:

> For me, there was not the kind of infrastructure to cope with the needs of the participants. My opinion was that we really needed to have an actual therapist there at least one day a week. I was also aware that a lot of these women had been involved with Crossing Communities for many, many years. A lot of them had a lot of skills at that point, and could have been taking on leadership roles. I felt very strongly that that was kind of the way that Edith promoted the idea, because Pat had taken on a leadership role, so we'd had one person who had kind of crossed over in a sense, and had done her degree and became an employee at the centre. I felt it was really important that the organization take on a different structure, rather than having Edith being on top and controlling everything and not allowing any kind of feedback.[108]

MacCormack's discussion of Crossing Communities is troubling, since she suggests that Regier's leadership was counterproductive to the goals of the organization: to empower marginalized women and create social change through art. Aylesworth was more positive about

[107] Anonymous participant, telephone conversation with the author, November 4, 2011.
[108] Jess MacCormack, interview with the author, September 20, 2011.

her experiences at Crossing Communities. She described Regier as a friend and mentor, but also stated that "I think [Regier] had spread herself a little thin, and it was creating a lot of conflict in the end."[109] While the participants raised important questions about the structure of Crossing Communities, they also pointed out that its value was in creating lasting relationships and in raising social awareness through art. The anonymous participant told me:

> Meeting Jess, meeting other people there has been a huge asset in my success since getting out of prison, since the odds aren't good for someone like me. Having people like Jess and Pat around has really helped. They have also been supportive of me as a creative person. The friendships are the most valuable thing I have taken from the experience.[110]

Similarly, MacCormack states:

> As much as I was frustrated with all of these different things, I also really appreciated that I was working directly with these people, and ended up meeting people that I would never have met, and a lot of the projects we did together I feel really good about. I'm still in contact with these people. I don't think I'd be close friends with someone who is serving a life sentence on parole, and someone who is a trans first nations person living in poverty. I don't think I would have come to that without the centre. Not to mention whatever I think they've each individually gained, but just in terms of my own personal experiences, I think it's really affected my practice, my sense of the world, and my politics.[111]

Speaking with MacCormack brought up the fact that theory and practice do not always correspond, and that the actual functioning of Crossing Communities may have differed from the artwork and literature it has produced.

While it is important to acknowledge the internal conflict that has hindered Crossing Communities, I am more interested in exploring conflict as a potentially productive quality that when directed outwards, can be a means of reshaping social structures and dominant urban

[109] Aylesworth, interview.
[110] Anonymous participant, telephone conversation.
[111] MacCormack, interview.

narratives. It was clear to me after interviewing participants that despite the issues they had with the structure and leadership of the organization, they were still able to connect with each other and build a meaningful community around art. Their drawings, videos, photographs, performances and interventions interact with the social spaces of Winnipeg, confronting colonial attitudes that have manifested themselves in words and built forms. Crossing Communities participants have explored issues of gender, aboriginal identity, and gentrification in their artwork, and through their knowledge of the city, they have addressed the conflicts that produce urban space.

SECTION 5

Relational Aesthetics and Socially Engaged Art

So far, I have established Crossing Communities as a new genre public art project, and looked at issues of community, gender, subalternity, and site-specificity. In this section, I consider the project alongside work that may be described as relational aesthetics, and look at the implications for activism and collaboration that such a comparison brings up. Many of the projects carried out by Crossing Communities, as well as the working methods of the organization, bear resemblance to relational aesthetics. *Passing Pictures with Prisoners* privileged empathy and exchange, suggesting that states of consciousness could be embedded in material form through artwork, and that these objects and ephemera could be the impetus for communication. *Butterfly, Pictures of Self Harm,* and Aylesworth's *Home Sweet Home* all involved collaboration and the creation of public dialogues around contentious social issues. All of the projects are centred around conversation, relationships, and social change.

According to Nicolas Bourriaud, relational aesthetics "takes as its theoretical horizon the realm of human interactions and its social context."[112] It is worth discussing this form of art making in greater detail, first, because it has become a popular and widely recognized mode of contemporary art practice, and second, because it was conceived in the 1990s concurrently with new genre public art. Relational art consists of conversations, gift-giving, or other forms of exchange that supposedly exist outside of the standardized ways we communicate with each other. Bourriaud's influential *Relational Aesthetics* (published in French in 1998 and in English in 2002) is similar to Lacy's text in that the author gave name to a tendency taking place in art of the 1990s. However, Bourriaud saw few connections between relational art and art of the 1960s,

[112] Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics* (Dijon: Les presses réel, 2002), 14.

focusing instead on its correspondence with global economic movements privileging the exchange of services over goods. In *Relational Aesthetics,* Bourriaud repeatedly refers to work by Rirkrit Tiravanija, Liam Gillick, Philippe Parreno and Félix González-Torres, among others, whose work has since become synonymous with relational aesthetics.

For Bourriaud, a significant component of relational aesthetics involves creating an atmosphere of conviviality. He describes a project by Parreno at Le Consortium in Dijon, France in 1995, in which the artist organized a party in the gallery space. Other artists have created bars or relaxation areas in galleries and museums. In Tiravanija's work *Untitled (Free)* (1992) at 303 Gallery in New York, he set up a kitchen in the gallery and cooked curries for visitors (fig. 31). In 2011, this piece was acquired by the Museum of Modern Art. While it was on display, visitors were able to get a free curry lunch each day (cooked in the museum's kitchens and not in the galleries because of fire regulations). To me, this work does not suggest the creation of alternate forms of sociability as much as it calls attention to the power and resources of large institutions. It also highlights the comfortable relationship that has developed between relational aesthetics, institutions, and the international art market. I witnessed an example of this when I visited the Guggenheim Museum in New York in 2007 during the blockbuster relational aesthetics exhibition, *theanyspacewhatever*.[113] At the top of the spiraling museum was a space designed by Tiravanija and Douglas Gordon, where one could watch movies that had previously been banned in the United States. Bean bag chairs and an espresso bar sponsored by Illy completed the experience (fig. 32). While it was unexpected and enjoyable, this piece did not make me relate differently to others, or rethink the way that goods are typically exchanged. In fact, the experience could just as easily have been a promotion for Illy.

[113] The exhibition *theanyspacewhatever* took place at the Guggenheim Museum in New York from October 24, 2008–January 7, 2007.

Bourriaud condemns practices that attempt to change society, writing that "social utopias and revolutionary hopes have given way to everyday micro-utopias and imitative strategies, any stance that is 'directly' critical of society is futile, if based on the illusion of a marginality that nowadays is impossible, not to say regressive."[114] But is Bourriaud really a trustworthy figure when it comes to speaking about marginality? How can a privileged art-world insider with no direct experience of oppression proclaim that oppositional practices are regressive? Bourriaud quotes Félix Guattari to support his position: "just as I think it is illusory to aim at a step-by-step transformation of society, so I think that microscopic attempts, of the community and neighbourhood committee type, the organisation of day-nurseries in the faculty, and the like, play an absolutely crucial role."[115] To me, Guattari's statement actually relates better to Crossing Communities and WochenKlausur than to the convivial encounters of Tiravanija and Parreno. While the former work to make small changes to a structure or concept, the latter remain focused on imitating social situations and experiences. Bourriaud equates political commitment with revolutionary aspirations, leaving no room for projects that actually try to make the "microscopic attempts" called for by Guattari.

Many authors have criticized Bourriaud and the work he has helped to promote. Kester has pointed to some differences between relational art and new genre public art (or dialogical art). Regarding Bourriaud, he writes:

> Many of the projects he discusses remain essentially choreographed or staged; they still operate within what I term a "textual" register, in which the work of art, whether it's an object, a space, or an event, is programmed ahead of time and then set in place before the viewer. I tend to write about works that involve a more open-ended form of participatory interaction, drawn out over extended periods of time.[116]

[114] Bourriaud, 31.
[115] Félix Guattari quoted in Bourriaud, 31.
[116] Mick Wilson, "Autonomy, Agonism and Activist Art: An Interview with Grant Kester," *Art Journal* 66.3 (2007): 112.

Claire Bishop is one of the most frequently cited critics of Bourriaud. In her 2004 article, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics" she refers to work by several artists discussed by Bourriaud. Bishop argues that such work erases rather than sustains conflict. Referring to Tiravanija's 1992 version of *Untitled (Free)*, she points out that while it successfully created a convivial atmosphere, its main outcome was to encourage "networking among a group of art dealers and like-minded art lovers." She writes, "there is debate and dialogue in a Tiravanija cooking piece, to be sure, but there is no inherent friction since the situation is what Bourriaud calls "microtopian": it produces a community whose members identify with each other, because they have something in common."[117] Citing Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau, she points out that the erasure of conflict disables the democratizing force of the artwork. Dialogue is privileged as inherently good, as a move towards democracy and away from the primacy of the visual associated with modern art.

I appreciate Bishop's critique of relational aesthetics, and I especially agree with her points on its elitism and its lack of ability to sustain conflict. However, it is troubling to me that she conflates relational aesthetics with new genre public art, and does not acknowledge the ways in which the latter has differently addressed issues of conflict and community. As well, she ends her essay by praising artworks that confirm boundaries between art and society "after a century of attempts to fuse them,"[118] thereby calling for an increased autonomy of art. As I discussed in Section 1, Kester critiques this position in *The One and the Many* (and directly addresses Bishop's points) by examining art projects that collapse the boundaries of modernist aesthetic autonomy. Bishop's argument regarding autonomy was also critiqued by Amelia Jones in an essay titled "Performance: Time, Space and Cultural 'Value,'" which was given as a talk at

[117] Claire Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," *October* 110 (2004): 51-79.
[118] Bishop, 78.

Concordia University in April 2010. Jones critiques Bourriaud, arguing that feminist and queer performance art has been investigating relationships between subjects and creating temporary social situations for decades. For Jones, art should be a way of moving past boundaries, which she describes as the "containing" function of European aesthetics. Boundaries result in the exclusion of "the potentially scary, fleshy, joyous, wounded, and/or abject vicissitudes of embodied human experience."[119] Jones argues that both Bourriaud and Bishop have attempted to contain spaces of embodied experience, and she calls for a reexamination of "past cultural forays into embodiment, performativity, reciprocity, interralationality."[120] She suggests taking another look at work associated with new genre public art, particularly that of Lacy, because it recognizes the impossibility of creating boundaries between art, politics and society.

New genre public art and relational aesthetics share certain affinities, including an emphasis on collaboration and the creation of alternate forms of community. Crossing Communities has brought together women from very different backgrounds who were able to connect with each other and share experiences through art. Jones and Kester make it clear, however, that there are key differences between these genres, including the social space in which the works unfold and the subjective relationships that are involved. Crossing Communities is more politically committed than most work that has come to exemplify relational aesthetics. It operates (for the most part) outside of a high-art context; it possesses a degree of permanence and stability; it has sparked difficult questions about cultural exchange across barriers of race and class; and it has engaged in activism in a specific urban setting. Crossing Communities is by no means a utopian space. The interviews I have conducted underscore some of the shortcomings of the project. They also distinguish it from relational art practices, and position it as a socially

[119] Amelia Jones, "Performance: Time, Space and Cultural 'Value,'" in *One Day Sculpture,* ed. David Cross and Claire Doherty (Bielefeld: Kerber Verlag, 2009), 31.
[120] Ibid.

engaged, participatory practice that highlights the importance of (strategic) communal bonds. My discussion has related Crossing Communities to certain aspects of relational aesthetics, but I also see the project as a challenge to the stature of this genre within the realm of contemporary art, and a sign that elements associated with new genre public art remain relevant in investigations of art as social change.

CONCLUSION

Community, Conflict, Difference: Key Words for Future Activist Art

Throughout this thesis, I have portrayed Crossing Communities as a new genre public art project that questions social exclusions in Winnipeg's public spaces and empowers women through participation in collaborative art making. My approach has involved analyzing the artworks produced by participants, the contexts in which they were created, and the modes in which they were displayed. Like other new genre public art projects, Crossing Communities has emphasized relationships between participants and has structured its collaborations around dialogue. Its working processes have revolved around issues affecting the women involved, who have formed communal bonds through shared experiences of incarceration, abuse, drug addiction, prostitution, and mental health issues. As an initial project, *Passing Pictures with Prisoners* explored ways that art could create social change. It was conceived of as a way to spark agency and empowerment among a group of women marginalized within public spaces and civic discourses. The artworks were made through creative exchanges between incarcerated women and established women artists, who shared and learned from each other. *Passing Pictures* was a temporary project, and was hindered by a lack of resources as well as censorship by prison officials. However, it initiated the Crossing Communities Art Project, which was able to focus more deeply on creating a collective voice through art. Over the past decade, Crossing Communities has produced numerous artworks and has hosted dozens of screenings and forums. The works have dealt with issues important to criminalized women who became involved with Crossing Communities in order to control self-representation, communicate experiences of oppression, and form meaningful bonds with other participants.

The artwork made through Crossing Communities is valuable on its own, for the aesthetic choices that are visible and the political issues that are brought up. The works are also valuable to consider as documents of the collaborative, dialogical, and political processes associated with new genre public art. *Women and Girls in the Sex Trade* dealt with issues of self-representation and performativity. The women made choices about how to portray themselves and share their stories. Screening the video in public forums, including non-art settings, was a way to widen the circle of influence of the work, to reach out both to individuals who might not otherwise encounter art, and to individuals who might not otherwise hear first-hand stories about prostitution. As a commemoration of missing and murdered women, *Butterfly* was both moving and disturbing, adding to a growing awareness of the severity of the issue. *Pictures of Self Harm* worked in a similar manner, and its screening in Nepal enabled bonds to form between women in different geographical locations. Other works, including the postcard project and the digital photography workshop, encouraged women to control self-representation, connect with their cultural identities, and confront systemic and hegemonic forces of oppression.

A community grew around women who have been positioned as subaltern. Together, they were able to speak more forcefully about their experiences, and could direct their anger against structural processes of oppression. An important question that has been brought up repeatedly throughout this thesis is: how does one build community without erasing difference, or glossing over conflict? Many relational artworks have demonstrated a postmodern skepticism toward social change and communal bonds. While they centre on exchange and human relationships, they avoid overt politics, and prioritize the preservation of individual differences and subjectivities. Crossing Communities, in contrast, has not avoided engaging in activism, and has demonstrated that communities can form around shared experiences of oppression without

individual differences being erased. The participants who came to Crossing Communities were not united through positive identification, but instead, became allied through resisting an interconnected web of oppressive forces—including poverty, racism, and the justice system.

Crossing Communities was not a unified or coherent entity. The participants were linked together through their involvement with the organization, and together they shared their stories with other communities (including the arts community and the activist community in Winnipeg, among others). Their voices were recognized as important contributions to a larger project, yet they each had opportunities to tell their individual stories. For many of the participants, including Aylesworth, the process of making art was relatively unproblematic, and she was able to separate individual and collaborative work. For others, including Traverse, the desire to make her own art grew, and working on a collaborative project was no longer interesting or rewarding. This difference in attitude towards authorship and creativity was perhaps one of the factors (along with funding) that contributed to the project's current on-hold status.

The relationships that were formed through Crossing Communities, as well as the individual projects that took place, have been unanimously praised by participants. However, Crossing Communities is far from being a perfect model of new genre public art (not that one exists). It has experienced conflicts throughout its lifespan, which is not surprising given the presence of so many individuals making art together and simultaneously dealing with histories of trauma and abuse. Several participants have criticized Regier for not incorporating their input into the structure of the organization, and for not doing enough to ensure that mental health issues were taken care of. It is important to include these critiques in the space of this thesis to highlight some of the pitfalls of community-based art, and to provide suggestions for future projects involving collaboration and activism.

While the project has had its shortcomings, the strength of Crossing Communities has been in providing a platform through which the private experiences of participants could become public. Crossing Communities, as both organization and art practice, was a vehicle for drawings, paintings, photographs, videos and performances, which it helped to propel outwards. As interventions into Winnipeg's public spaces, the projects have addressed issues outside of the typical worldview of most citizens. Some of the projects I have discussed intervened in physical public spaces, including *Home Sweet Home* by Pat Aylesworth. Other projects inserted themselves into the public sphere in a less tangible way, through dialogue and audience interaction, and through an engagement with sites where concrete political change is possible, including prisons, hospitals, and community organizations. As new genre public art, Crossing Communities demonstrates an adherence to political activism in a city shaped by social exclusion and conflict. Examining the project has been a way to assert the continued significance of politically committed, collaborative practices within contemporary art. Regardless of the form that the project takes in the future, it stands as a site where dialogue was encouraged, social issues were addressed, and relationships were formed through art.

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FIGURES

Figure 1 Portage Correctional Centre in Manitoba
2012
Photograph
Source: Google Maps. Web. Accessed 10 June 2012.

Figure 2 *Tableaux Vivant: Eaton's Catalogue 1976*
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1998
Photograph
Source: Edith Regier, ed., *Passing Pictures with Prisoners* (Winnipeg: Mentoring Artists for Women's Art, 2001).

Figure 3 *Anishna What!?*
Debby Keeper
1995
Video still
Source: Edith Regier, ed., *Passing Pictures with Prisoners* (Winnipeg: Mentoring Artists for Women's Art, 2001).

Figure 4 *Untitled*
Amanda Lepine in conversation with Debby Keeper
1999
Drawing
Source: Edith Regier, ed., *Passing Pictures with Prisoners* (Winnipeg: Mentoring Artists for Women's Art, 2001).

Figure 5 *Untitled*
Yvonne Johnson in conversation with Connie Cohen
1999
Mixed media
Source: Edith Regier, ed., *Passing Pictures with Prisoners* (Winnipeg: Mentoring Artists for Women's Art, 2001).

Figure 6 *Untitled*
Connie Cohen in conversation with Yvonne Johnson
1999
Mixed media
Source: Edith Regier, ed., *Passing Pictures with Prisoners* (Winnipeg: Mentoring Artists for Women's Art, 2001).

Figure 7 *Untitled*
Amanda Lepine in conversation with Debby Keeper
1999
Drawing
Source: Edith Regier, ed., *Passing Pictures with Prisoners* (Winnipeg: Mentoring Artists for Women's Art, 2001).

Figure 8 *Untitled*
Colleen Cutschall and Wendy Cook
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Source: Edith Regier, ed., *Passing Pictures with Prisoners* (Winnipeg: Mentoring Artists for Women's Art, 2001).

Figure 9 *Code 33*
Suzanne Lacy, Julio Morales and Unique Holland, with Kim Batiste, Raul Cabra, Patrick Toebe, David Goldberg, and Anne Maria Hardeman.
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Photograph of performance
Source: www.suzannelacy.com. Accessed June 10, 2012.

Figure 10 *Domestic Violence Milk Carton Project*
Peggy Diggs
1991-92
Photograph of printed milk cartons
Source: Patricia C. Phillips, "Peggy Diggs: Private Acts and Public Art," in Nina Felshin, ed., *But is it Art? The Spirit of Art as Activism* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1995), 294.

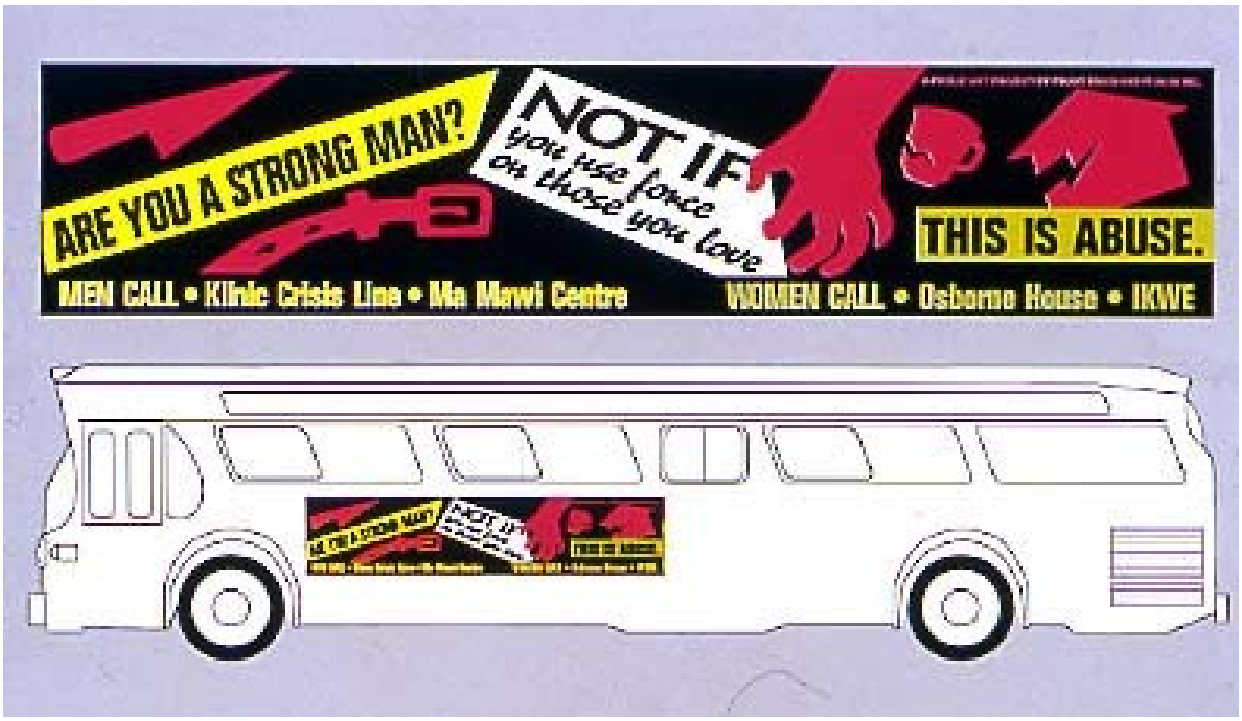

Figure 11 *Winnipeg Public Bus Project*
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Illustration of public art installation on transit buses
Source: Web. http://web.williams.edu/humanities/pdiggs/projects0.html. Accessed November 30, 2011.

Figure 12 *Intervention to Aid Drug-Addicted Women*
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Photograph of performance
Source: Web. www.wochenklausur.at. Accessed February 2012.

Figure 13 *Butterfly*
Jackie Traverse and Crossing Communities
2007
Video still
Source: Web. www.lookinginspeakingout.com. Accessed September 2011.

Figure 14 *Women and Girls in the Sex Trade*
Crossing Communities Art Project
2005
Video still
Source: *Women and Girls in the Sex Trade,* DVD.

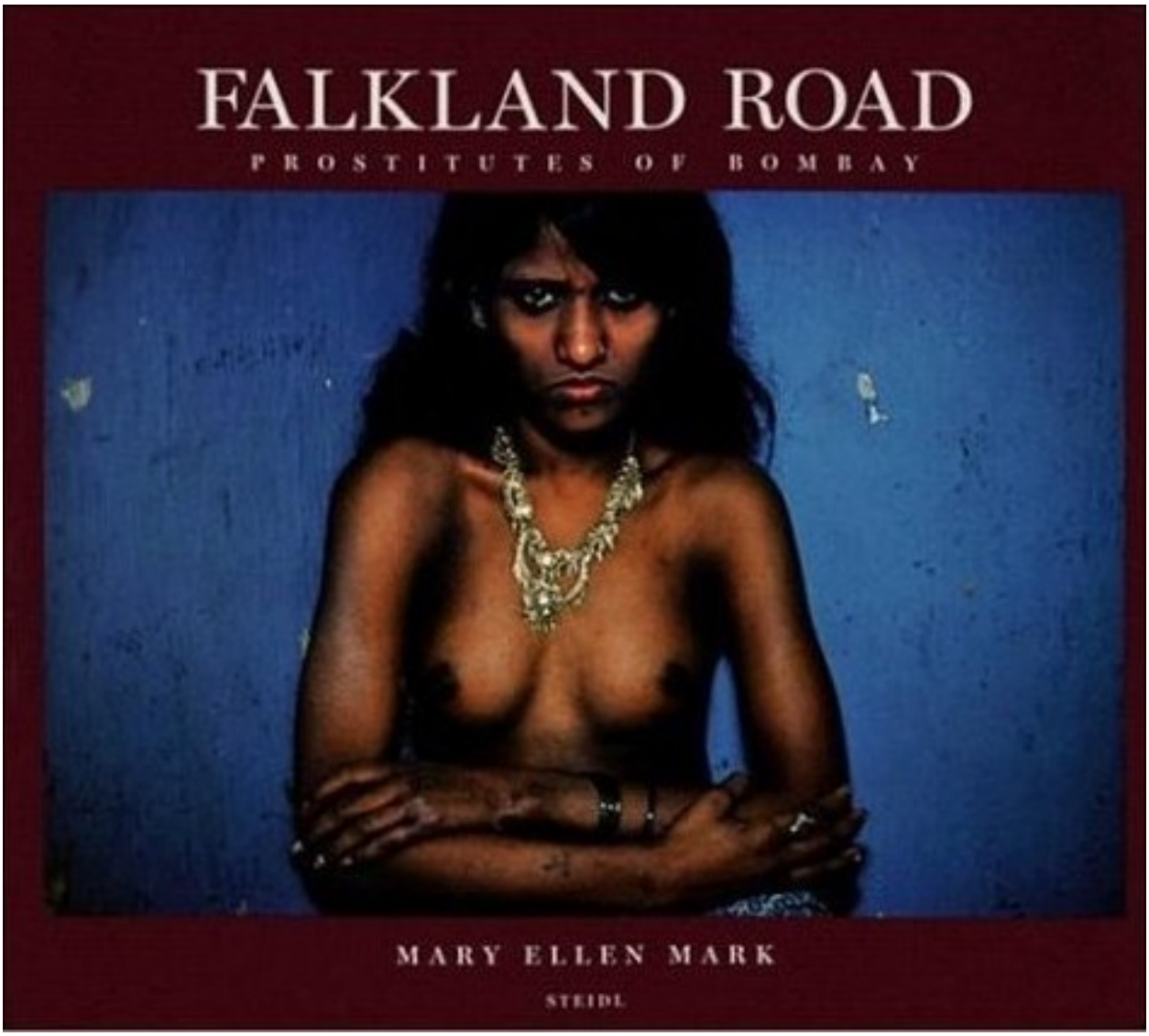

Figure 15 Book cover
Mary Ellen Mark, *Falkland Road: Prostitutes of Bombay* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1981).

Figure 16 *Pictures of Self Harm*
Crossing Communities Art Project
2008
Video still
Source: Web. www.lookinginspeakingout.com. Accessed September 2011.

Figure 17 *Empty*
Jackie Traverse and Crossing Communities Art Project
2009
Video still
Source: Web. www.lookinginspeakingout.com. Accessed September 2011.

Figure 18 *From White to Red*
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2009
Video still
Source: Web. www.lookinginspeakingout.com. Accessed September 2011.

Figure 19 *Street Level Video*
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1993
Photograph of installation
Source: Web. www.never-the-same.org. Accessed December, 2011.

Figure 20 *I awoke to find my spirit had returned*
Rosalie Favell
1999
Giclée print on paper
Source: Winnipeg Art Gallery.

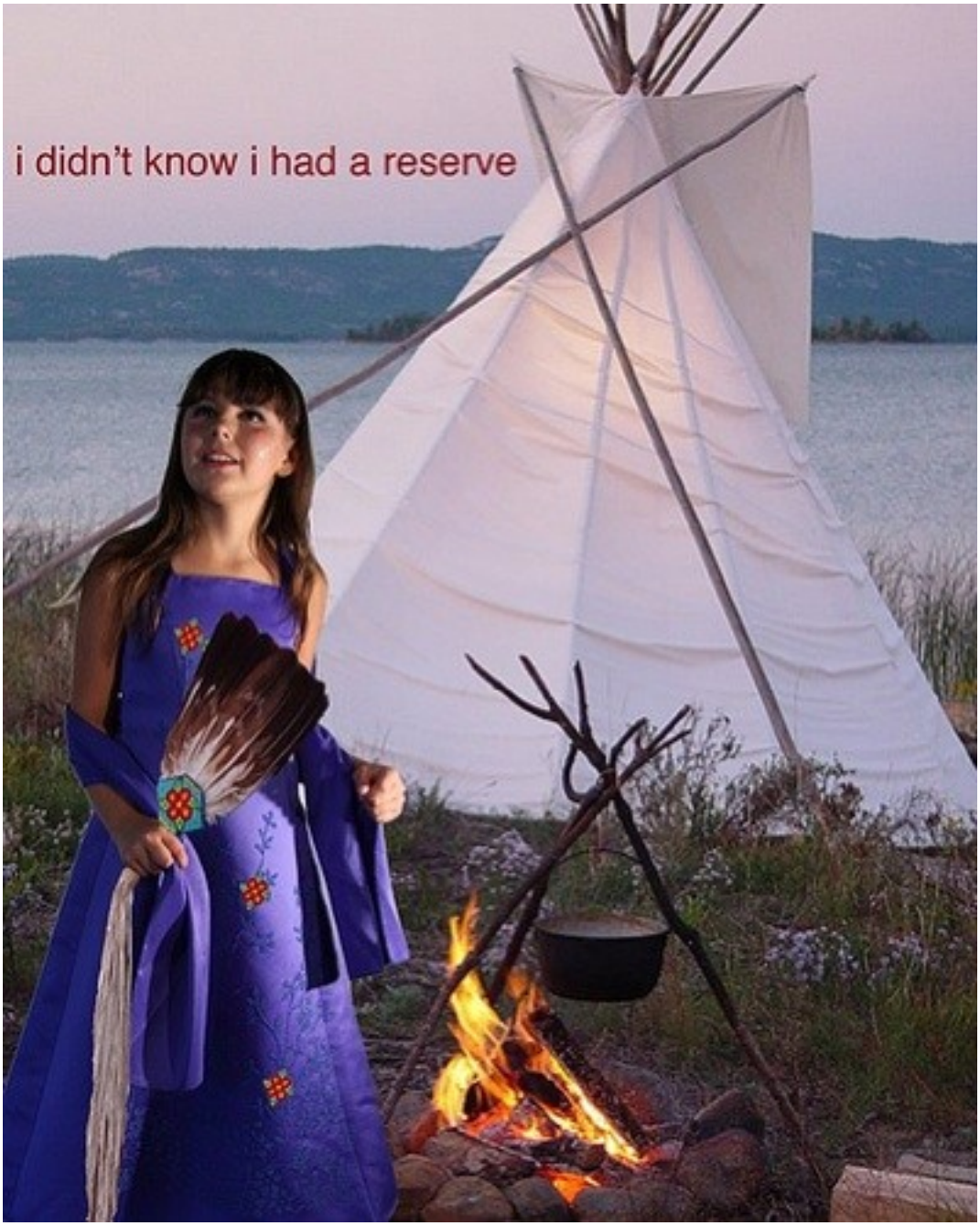

Figure 21 *I didn't know I had a reserve*
Unknown artist and Crossing Communities
2008
Digital collage
Source: Web. www.lookingingspeakingout.com. Accessed September 2011.

Figure 22 *Untitled*
Jackie Traverse and Crossing Communities
2008
Digital collage
Source: Web. www.lookinginspeakingout.com. Accessed September 2011.

Figure 23 *RESERVED*
Unknown artist and Crossing Communities
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Source: Web. www.lookinginspeakingout.com. Accessed September 2011.

Figure 24 *Aurora*
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Photograph: Noni Brynjolson, July 2010.

Figure 25 *Tilted Arc*
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Source: Photograph by David Aschkenas, 1985.

Figure 26 *Northern No. 1*
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Sculpture, Canadian Grains Commission Building, Winnipeg
Source: Web. www.winnipegdowntownplaces.blogspot.ca. Photographer unknown. Accessed September 2011.

Figure 27 *Louis Riel*
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1971
Statue. Originally located at the Manitoba Legislature, then moved to the Collège Universitaire de St. Boniface in 1995.
Source: Photograph by James Teterenko, 2005.

Figure 28 *Louis Riel*
Miguel Joyal
Statue. Manitoba Legislative Building, Winnipeg.
Source: Photograph by Noni Brynjolson, July 2010.

Figure 29 *Bus Stories*
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Video still
Source: Web. www.lookinginspeakingout.com. Accessed September 2011.

Figure 30 *Home Sweet Home*
Pat Aylesworth
2008
Public art installation, various locations in Winnipeg
Source: Web. http://mawa.ca/artbuildingcommunity/aylesworth/index.html. Accessed November, 2011.

Figure 31 *Untitled (Free)*
Rirkrit Tiravanija
First performed in 1992 at 303 Gallery in New York. Photograph shows the piece reinstalled at the Museum of Modern Art, New York in 2011.
Source: Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Figure 32 *Cinéma Liberté/Bar Lounge*
Rirkrit Tiravanija and Douglas Gordon
First exhibited in 1996. Photograph shows the piece installed at the Guggenheim Museum, New York in 2008 during the exhibition *theanyspacewhatever.*
Source: Walter Robinson, "Space Cadets," *Artnet,* 24 October 2008, www.artnet.com, accessed April 2012.

APPENDIX

The Crossing Communities Art Project: A Timeline[121]

1996-1999
Edith Regier establishes the Portage Art Project, a weekly art studio project at the Portage Correctional Centre in Manitoba.

1999
Regier organizes the *Passing Pictures with Prisoners* project, which involves six imprisoned women and four mentoring artists. The work is exhibited in *6+4=Passing Pictures* at Urban Shaman Gallery, an aboriginal artist-run centre.

2000
Regier initiates the Crossing Communities Art Project and opens a studio space in Winnipeg's downtown Exchange District.

2001
A public forum takes places at Plug In ICA in Winnipeg titled *New Genre Public Art,* featuring Suzanne Lacy, Edith Regier, and several other speakers. The event coincides with the launch of the book, *Passing Pictures with Prisoners*, edited by Regier, and an exhibition at Gallery 1C03 titled *Conditional Sentences / Reparative Pictures.*

2003
Crossing Communities receives charitable status.

2004
UK and Brazilian based People's Palace Project partner with the Crossing Communities Art Project. Together, the groups present a public forum, "Out and About," in Winnipeg that explores art as dialogue and examines alternatives to incarceration.

2005
October: **"**Trying to Exit," Winnipeg. Public screening of the video *Women and Girls in the Sex Trade,* which is accompanied by an open discussion. Hundreds of people including sex trade workers and Aboriginal elders join together to discuss issues related to working within and transitioning out of the sex trade in Winnipeg.

November: **"**Staging Human Rights," Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. An event that brought together Brazilian government officials, prisoners, prison staff and the public to dialogue though the arts about human rights in the justice system. Regier performed *In Memory of Darcie Hall*, which commemorated the life of a Crossing Communities participant who struggled with self harm.

[121] This timeline does not list all of the projects that have been carried out by Crossing Communities. It includes projects that have been analyzed within this thesis, or those which are relevant to my overall discussion. For a complete list of projects, visit the site www.lookinginspeakingout.com.

December: *Women and Girls in the Sex Trade* is screened for the Manitoba Women's Advisory Council.

2006
January: *Women and Girls in the Sex Trade* is screened for nursing students at the University of Manitoba.

Summer 2006: Crossing Communities conducted a series of workshops with youth incarcerated in the Manitoba Youth Centre. The workshops included multi-media poster making, photography and photocopy transfer and painting workshops. The mentors for these projects were Alison Davis, Dominique Rey, Jackie Traverse and Pat Aylesworth.

2007
September: *Women and Girls in the Sex Trade* is screened for a group of foster parents whose children are connected to the sex trade.

November: *Sisters of Sorrow, Sisters of Hope* takes place at Cinematheque in Winnipeg. The event honours missing and murdered women through film, drum song and audience discussion. One of the films screened is *Butterfly,* produced by Jackie Traverse and Crossing Communities. The event was a partnership between Crossing Communities and the Winnipeg Aboriginal Film Festival.

2008
January: Crossing Communities releases the documentary *Pictures of Self Harm,* which is premiered at the Winnipeg Art Gallery. The screening is accompanied by a lengthy discussion between audience members and Crossing Communities participants.

May: *Empty,* a video produced by Crossing Communities and Jackie Traverse, is screened in Kathmandu, Nepal as part of imagineNATIVE's 12 Canadian Shorts at the Nepal International Indigenous Film Festival.

Summer: Crossing Communities members Pat Aylesworth and Stephanie Scott and hip hop artist Wab Kinew lead workshops on music video making in Wasagamack First Nation, a reserve in northern Manitoba.

Rosalie Favell is a mentor and leads workshops on digital collage.

Jess MacCormack is a mentor, and leads workshops on photography, video and postcard making.

2009
May and June: Members of Crossing Communities travel to Nepal to work with the Women Foundation of Nepal. *Pictures of Self Harm* and *Empty* are screened for Nepali women, who make two videos in response: *White to Red: A Story of HIV* and *Why Self-Harm? A Discussion Among Nepali Youth.*

April: Public performance of “Winnipeg Child,” a Crossing Communities hip hop project. Fourteen aboriginal and immigrant youth wrote rap songs about life in Winnipeg and choreographed dance routines. The performance took place at the Rachel Browne Theatre in Winnipeg, and was carried out in partnership with Winnipeg's Contemporary Dancers.