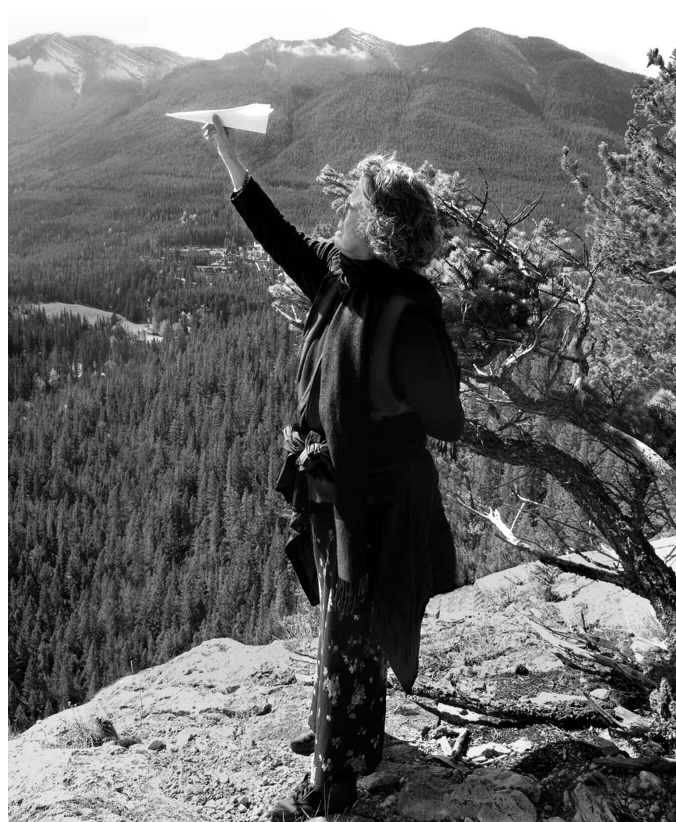


BETWEEN ONE AND ANOTHER

Pauline Cummins Sandra Vida



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performative video installations, Centre Culturel Irlandais, Paris

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Page 7: Pauline Cummins at Piper's Stones, Wicklow, Ireland by Avril Bailey;

Sandra Vida on Tunnel Mountain, Banff, Canada by Pauline Cummins

Essay images: video stills courtesy of the artists &: Unearthed by Breed a Mooney: More to come

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Page ? Pauline Cummins at Annaghmakerrig, Ireland by Sandra Vida: Sandra Vida at the Necropolis cemetery, Glasgow, Scotland by Jurgen Kierspel

Page ? Biography image of Cummins by Breed a Mooney; Biography image of Vida by the artist

Page 34: Mireille Perron by Joe Kelly

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THE CENTRE CULTUREL IRLANDAIS / THE IRISH COLLEGE, PARIS

The Centre Culturel Irlandais is part of the historic Irish College in Paris. In a lively cultural programme it presents the work of contemporary Irish artists in France. I have an ongoing interest in showing work which is the result of a collaborative process between artists; the long-standing relationship between Irish artist Pauline Cummins and Canadian artist Sandra Vida offers the possibility of presenting one such very fruitful and challenging collaboration.

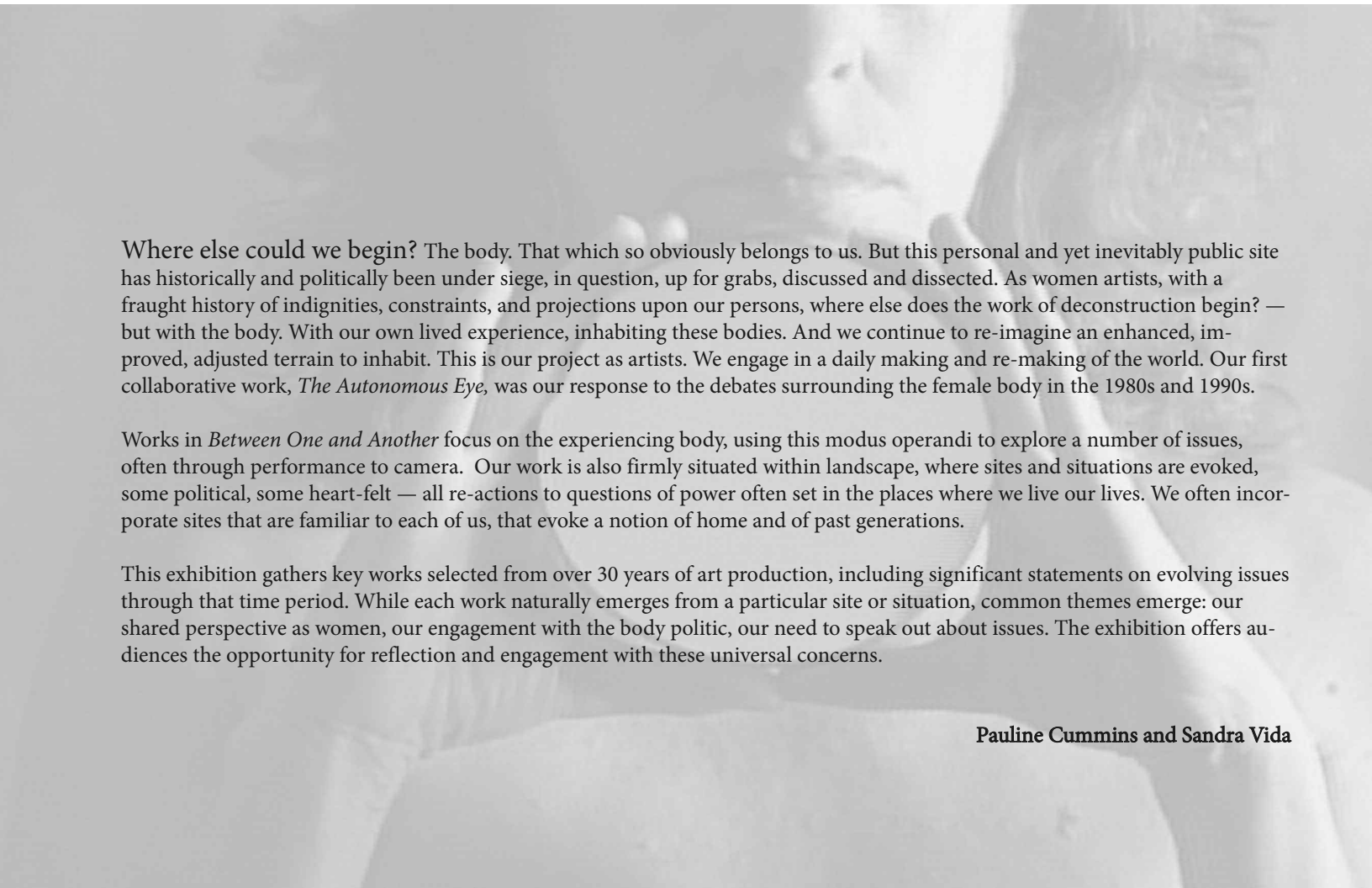
I am excited that this Irish-Canadian project provides a unique opportunity of showing innovative works that address important social and personal issues relevant to the artists, to their countries of origin and to an international audience.

It has been a pleasure to work with two artists whose professional commitment and wholehearted involvement has been manifest from the very beginning. Their engagement with the space, with the creative exchange which pushed the process ahead in an exciting fashion, made it a satisfying and rewarding project. In this I have, as ever, been supported by my wonderful staff in Paris.

I am delighted to develop new ties with the Canadian Cultural Centre in Paris, building on a previous successful co-presentation in 2009 of Lauren Phillips singing Ana Sokolovic's *Love Songs*. I welcome its involvement as a cultural and sponsoring partner and we proudly present this exhibition together.

It is my hope and belief that the exhibition, performance and round table conference will contribute to a lively exchange of ideas and foster further international dialogue.

Sheila Pratschke, Directrice, Centre Culturel Irlandais

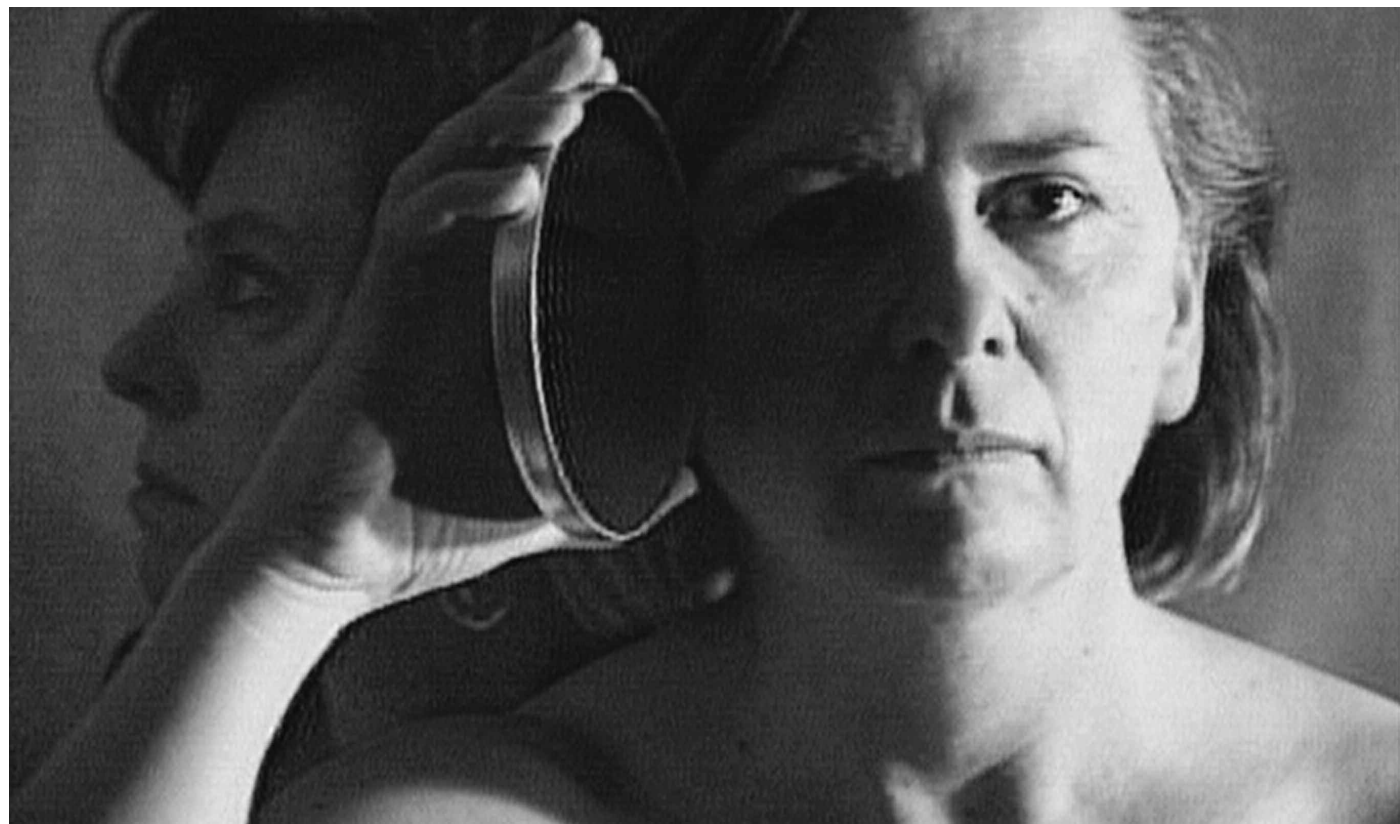


Where else could we begin? The body. That which so obviously belongs to us. But this personal and yet inevitably public site has historically and politically been under siege, in question, up for grabs, discussed and dissected. As women artists, with a fraught history of indignities, constraints, and projections upon our persons, where else does the work of deconstruction begin? — but with the body. With our own lived experience, inhabiting these bodies. And we continue to re-imagine an enhanced, improved, adjusted terrain to inhabit. This is our project as artists. We engage in a daily making and re-making of the world. Our first collaborative work, *The Autonomous Eye*, was our response to the debates surrounding the female body in the 1980s and 1990s.

Works in *Between One and Another* focus on the experiencing body, using this *modus operandi* to explore a number of issues, often through performance to camera. Our work is also firmly situated within landscape, where sites and situations are evoked, some political, some heart-felt — all re-actions to questions of power often set in the places where we live our lives. We often incorporate sites that are familiar to each of us, that evoke a notion of home and of past generations.

This exhibition gathers key works selected from over 30 years of art production, including significant statements on evolving issues through that time period. While each work naturally emerges from a particular site or situation, common themes emerge: our shared perspective as women, our engagement with the body politic, our need to speak out about issues. The exhibition offers audiences the opportunity for reflection and engagement with these universal concerns.

Pauline Cummins and Sandra Vida



BETWEEN ONE AND ANOTHER / SWEEPING CHANGE

The Space of Resilient Aesthetics in the works of Pauline Cummins and Sandra Vida

Between One and Another brings together, for the first time at the Centre Culturel Irlandais (CCI) [the Irish Cultural Centre] gallery in Paris, works by two established multi-media artists: Pauline Cummins and Sandra Vida. The former is Irish while the latter is Canadian of Scottish descent. The exhibition is aptly titled to express the association between the artists as well as their anticipated relationship with their viewers. 'Another' is one more, an additional person of the same type as the one already considered. Pauline Cummins and Sandra Vida invite their viewers to be another one, to regard one another the way the artists regard each other. This invitation/exhibition is an act of mutual recognition or agency, a collaborative enterprise that requires both independence and generous interaction. For Cummins and Vida, the skills needed to satisfy both conditions have been honed over twenty years of regular collaboration between each other as well as more than thirty years of professional activities with many (an) others. Accordingly, the various constructions of selves embodied in the carefully selected videographic installations from their vast repertoire, as well as an opening performance titled *Sweeping Change*, specially scripted for the courtyard of the Centre Culturel Irlandais, reflect many decades of experience. Cummins and Vida expect that the discovery of commonalities in their lives and in their works will find an echo in their viewers, and will embody for us, as it did for them, a redefinition of the possibilities open to one another.

Being dedicated women artists, feminists, and cultural activists means for Cummins and Vida an enduring capacity to (re) invent the self in liminal spaces. Feminist scholar Carolyn Heilbrun uses the concept of liminality in its wider anthropological application

to 'threshold people'. She explains that 'The essence of liminality is revealed in women's experience once they are willing to move from convention to another form of self-expression.' Liminality, from the Latin word *limen*, implies a subjective state of being on the 'threshold' or between two different existential planes. Liminality is the state of being neither-this-nor-that, betwixt and between, neither me nor not-me. Victor Turner, a leading anthropologist, sees liminality, marginality, and structural inequality as conditions frequently employed to generate myths, symbols, rituals, philosophical systems, and works of art. Turner explains that these cultural forms provide us with transitional models to renew relationships with one another, society, nature, and culture. These artists' explicit choice of media: performance, installation, video and new media as well as their reactivation of Celtic myths, symbols, and rituals support this interpretation. I propose that the liminal space generated by the artists is one of resilient aesthetics. Each one of the selected videographic/performative productions presented in *Between One and Another* has a multi-vocal character capable of moving us at many psychobiological levels simultaneously. The artists' preference for time-based media, where temporality can instigate a perceptual critique, where transition can be simultaneously the subject of a work as well as the medium, is where their feminist aesthetics and politics are reunited. Like many feminist artists of their generation, the first to access time-based media on a larger scale, using 'new' media (then video, performance, installation, now extended digital media) was in itself a strategy of resistance/resilience. For Cummins and Vida, feminism(s) and time-based media are twin framing paradigms for life and work. Feminist film, video and performance, along with feminist theory of the gaze are, among many others, outcomes of the women's movement that became some of its best tools to create alternative representations of dominant categories such as femininity, masculinity, sexuality, space and politics. The coming of age of feminist performance, film and video was a political urgency that both artists took as their life project. Their contributions in these fields are too numerous to encompass in one exhibition. *Between One and Another* invites us to a condensed version of a very rich 'herstory'. The selected works are an invitation to experience a transitional space of resilient aesthetics by engaging with the artists in alternative modes of being in the world.

The CCI courtyard is an oasis of space and calm away from the activities of the Latin Quarter. It is as much a surprise to the senses today as it must have been when the Irish first enjoyed the courtyard in 1775. Furthermore, the discovery of two women totally immersed in unusual activities that look nevertheless strangely familiar is quite unexpected in this sanctuary. One woman is pouring hefty amounts of salt in a large circle. She is totally absorbed by her actions. When the circle is formed, another woman comes

along with a large leafy birch branch and sweeps the area in broad circular motions. As reflected in the *Sweeping Change* performance, both artists give more weight to knowledge derived from women's embodied experience than to more official sources of knowledge. In doing so, they indicate that tacit knowledge should be positioned at the centre of culture, not at its margins. Women claiming space is still a radical gesture in alignment with major shifts in the history of the world, including changes at the CCI. First a seminary, it is only since modern times that the College's program has served both women and men. With their gestures, Cummins and Vida make room for themselves as well as cleansing the site of any historical exclusion of the female. Such performance is particularly poignant as the CCI was since its beginning a space of education and freedom from repression for Catholic Irish priests and students. *Sweeping Change* asserts the need for powerful institutions to re-assess their initial mandate, and reminds us that freedom is better shared.

***The Autonomous Eye* (5:10 minutes 1992, released 1995)**

Presented in the antechamber of the gallery, *The Autonomous Eye* is the first videographic work to greet viewers as they enter from the open courtyard. It was produced in 1992 while Cummins and Vida were both artists in residence at the Banff Centre, Banff, Canada. The artists took part in a thematic residency curated by contemporary art historian, Christine Ross, under the theme, *The Instability of the Feminist Subject*. The residency provoked lively discussions centered on questions such as 'how can one think of the mutability of identity in relation to the fallibility of the body?' and 'how does one construct the self outside of the patriarchal realm?' *The Autonomous Eye* offers possible and convincing propositions. Cummins and Vida take control of both viewing and representation by being simultaneously performers and videographers or, said differently, subjects and objects. Both artists are disconcertingly naked while they film one another filming one another as if to emphasize that the nude is a production of the lens, the eye, and the mind. The outcome is an expert series of successive frames within frames, a skilled play of reflections with mirrors and endless perspectives.

The realm of the visual has traditionally been defined for women by men, from Lacan's mirror stage to Freud's fragmented and fetishized female body. *The Autonomous Eye* invites viewers to consider the limitations of these existing frameworks and offers a new poetics of images that has to take into account the impossibility of autonomy. This collaborative work does not attempt to produce more authentic images of women to replace inauthentic ones. Its subject is the process of representation itself and the dif-

ficulty for the two artists as feminist subjects to perform and produce images between one and another. If there is no possibility for autonomy, *The Autonomous Eye* reminds us that emancipation can nevertheless reside in the awareness of how everything is constructed, controlled, and monitored. This awareness is exemplified very effectively in one of the opening scenes. In the background, a naked Cummins enters the scene from behind the recording camera. She squints at the off-screen monitor, then casually puts her glasses on in order to see better the images that Vida, located in the foreground, also naked, is capturing with a round hand mirror, as the scene unfolds before a large standing mirror that contains both artists, sometimes doubled as reflections of themselves. This play, between eyes, mirrors, and lenses, unfolds for the duration of *The Autonomous Eye*. The work is simultaneously an investigation of video as a medium through the female body and an exploration of the feminist gaze through video. Very appropriately, the closing scene offers the artists as a double-headed goddess of transition. Or as Cummins suggests, the figure of Janus who looks backwards and forwards simultaneously.

***New Spin* by Pauline Cummins (one of a trilogy of works with new soundtrack, 8:12 minutes, 2010/2012) and *Elegy: a meditation on mortality* by Sandra Vida (10 minute loop, 2010)**

New Spin by Pauline Cummins and *Elegy: a meditation on mortality* by Sandra Vida, call for a comparative examination since they are projected large scale in succession on the back wall of the gallery. These two works join many contemporary artworks in their function as transitional objects that engage in questions of identity, self-identity, illness and wellness. Jeanne Randolph was the first writer in Canada to adapt from Object Relations psychoanalytic theory, the concept of the transitional object as a medium for art criticism. Taking as her point of departure the writings of psychoanalyst Donald Woods Winnicott (1896–1971), Randolph counters the conventional Freudian interpretation of “art-as-neurosis,” with “art-as amenable or transitional object”. Winnicott noted the importance of external objects in symbol formation and fantasy as children and later as adults develop, review, and renew a sense of self. Randolph extrapolated that artworks are some of the most sophisticated transitional objects artists create for adults to interact with the world. Following Winnicott and Randolph’s theories, I propose that *Elegy: a meditation on mortality*, and *New Spin* act as transitional objects capable of generating a space of resilient aesthetics. In both works that space is constructed, among other ways, by using as a recurrent pattern/symbol/theme spinning and/or spiraling from one state to another.



Elegy: a meditation on mortality is a poetic narrative that investigates the intricacy and vulnerability of the body's interior landscape by using aspects of human physiology and pathology. The departure point for this work was a personal misfortune. Immobilized after a bicycle accident, Vida's personal journey to recovery became the primary material for her evocative work. This richly layered composition combines a variety of animation techniques in a consummate manner. Vida's proficiency with layering and collage is once more put to excellent use. For example, in one scene, a spinning bicycle wheel recalls the dreadful moment of the accident. However, the wheel slowly morphs into beautiful swirls of natural colours indicative of the cycles of life and the passing of time. In later scenes, we see an effective superimposition of medical images of a skeleton with the artist's feet, legs and hands in motion. Throughout the composition, Vida uses very effectively her animated walking silhouette as a frame. This echoes Vida's use of her own body as persona and subject throughout her work, beginning with her first installation with lifesize photographic cut-outs, in 1985. In *Elegy*, her contours successively surround natural scenes shot around her neighbourhood as well as cleverly framing medical imagery. At regular intervals, her hands appear to write, draw and flip through medical books and sketchbooks, thus offering a first person view of her activities while in convalescence. In a further scene, she is opening the fugitive sheets of a medical model thus creating an interesting parallel between the process of discovering information in layers as used both in art and medicine. Vida's meditation on her own mortality gets entangled with the memory of her mother's illness and passing away the previous year. The triad, past, present, and future, becomes the companion motif to the spiral. It is used in many scenes: three windows frames, three silhouettes, and three layers. The processes behind making the video echo the processes of recovery by stages. The sound track effectively completes the images; piano notes, heart pulses, metronomic cadences, and medical alarm beeps emphasize the passage of time. *Elegy* is simultaneously an homage to the cycles of life and to being an artist. The processes of video making and the procedures of medicine/healing both involve connective and reparative actions. Vida cuts, patches, collages and stitches like the best of surgeons. The difference in her effort to mend and preserve herself is that she operates primarily on images. *Elegy* is the work of a skillful artist expertly playing with her medium.

New Spin by Pauline Cummins is also a poetic reflection of a cyclical nature. The artist uses spinning as a powerful metaphor to symbolize various revolutions. *New Spin* consists of a recent edit that includes a new soundtrack for Paris. The piece was first shown as *The Still Centre*, in a three-part video installation for *Un-Building*, an exhibition conceived of by Clíodhna Shaffrey for the Mermaid Art Centre, Co. Wicklow, 2010. For that show, Cummins appeared in three different locations, including the Lake at



Lacken, the centre of a sunny 17th century riding ring and on the mountain tops of West Wicklow, where she enacted rotating motions with her arms extended, not unlike a whirling dervish. The new version starts with images of the County Wicklow landscape (where Cummins lives) and the voice of the artist humming and softly singing, seemingly to herself. Cummins then takes us on a journey over mountains and hills, spinning faster and faster. We visit the megalithic Piper's Stones, spinning at speed, where the stones appear to pop up out of the landscape itself. Through multiple exposures, her image doubles and triples while her revolving movements intensify to the point of seemingly sending off in orbit one of her multiplied 'selves'. The artist appears on a road on top of a hill where she continues to spin wildly, in fast-forward motions. This cycle of events repeats itself at various speeds in several other sequences ending at the top of a hill overlooking a lake as the sun sets. The overall effect is that the self and its environment are blended in a whirlwind of displaced sensations, always in a process of becoming, of development, and of renewal. Shaffrey's analysis of New Spin's matrix, *The Still Centre*, uses Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological idea of the body as the primary site for knowing the world:

The Still Centre presents a mesmerizing trilogy evoking a care-free and buoyant spirit — the small figure in the vast and picturesque landscape — suggesting we are only a tiny particle of

the bigger world around us, and yet, the sense of being at one with and intertwined in this world is achieved in the comic and bizarre presence of the *spinning figure*.¹

In *New Spin*, rotating becomes a powerful way to share “the fundamental condition of our existence; we continuously revolve from the molecular plane to the personal and planetary levels.”² *New Spin* ends with the artist walking out of the courtyard.

Simultaneously turned inward while looking outward; *New Spin and Elegy* use performative actions to generate a representational regime that vacillates between objectivity and subjectivity to inform the perception of the self, as well as its reception. In doing so, such works function as transitional objects that help us imagine new models of representation for our physical, social, medical, and spiritual selves. Vida’s *Elegy*, and Cummins’ *New Spin*, like most aesthetic experiences, are non-didactic propositions. The artists create a space of resilient aesthetics where they invite viewers to join them in open-ended and cyclical narratives.



Entrenched (5:18 minute loop, 1999) and *Unearthed* (19 minutes, 1988/90) by Pauline Cummins; *Threads* by Sandra Vida, (originally 3-channel video installation, 6 minute loop, 2007)

Entrenched and *Unearthed*, each on a monitor with headphones, and *Threads*, on two monitors with a single sound track, complete the selection in the gallery. *Threads* uses as a departure point Vida's ancestors who worked in Glasgow. Her great grandmother and great aunt worked in the cotton mills while her great grandfather and his father toiled in the shipyards. The artist's past relatives become her way to explore labour history and the often-fraught idea of progress in industry and commerce. This personal investigation also reveals a parallel in the exploitation of poor British and enslaved African workers in cotton production. Ships that brought back cotton from America to British cotton-weaving factories picked up Africans who were forced into working for the cotton farming industry in America. *Threads* is reformatted for this exhibition as a two-channel video installation where the beautiful and mesmerizing flow of images and sounds unravel the hidden story of labour exploitation. Evocative images of bolts of cloth and flowing water are paired with images of the artist's hands working with threads and lighting candles. Vida's enactment of this link to personal history encourages a contemporary equivalence to our times and its growing exploitation of "off-shore" cheap labour. Vida has used comparable strategies in previous works to similar effect, such as in the multi-media installation "...near where my great aunt was born..." (1992) in which she dressed as her great aunt and explored the streets of Glasgow in search of her ancestor's personal story. In a three-channel video work *Triad* (1995), she brought an ancient Celtic myth into play within a contemporary situation.

Entrenched, by Pauline Cummings is a collaboration with artists Krijnie Beyen (Dutch) and Breeda Mooney (Irish), first presented in the exhibition 'Going Dutch', Dublin, 1999. It offers a tense viewing of two women, incapable of reconciliation, living together in a sparse domestic environment. The two main settings consist of a bare room where the women struggle to both take hold of a glass windowpane and a room with a table and chair where they argue about the placement of the chair. Most scenes are presented in very slow motion while the audio track blurs the dialogue into incomprehensible utterances. Christine Ross theorizes slow motion as an alternative form of temporality that is the perceptual equivalent of depression. In her book, *The Aesthetics of Disengagement: Contemporary Art and Depression*, Ross explores the ways in which selected time-based artworks perform the detached aesthetics of depression. Ross argues that these artworks rethink intersubjectivity and temporality by appropriating the sympto-

matic language of depression to enact/rehearse disengagement. Ross defines disengagement as marked withdrawal, radical protection of the self from the other, isolation, communications ruptures, and distancing signals, all characteristics enacted by Cummins' staged opponents. How the adversaries feel, when facing the inability to rationalize and explain away their conflict, is conveyed through atypical temporalities. Most importantly, Ross believes that art can transform disengagement into a perceptual strategy by providing the viewer with a safe space to rehearse the effects of impaired faculties. She posits that artworks can convey depression's subjectivity by re-enacting cognitive dissonance thus allowing viewers to rehearse coping mechanisms that can lead to a new understanding of depression. Said differently, these affective encounters allow viewers to perform peculiar temporalities (slowing down or speeding-up) not only as deficit or maladaptive behaviour but also as reparative impulses. Tellingly, Cummins also made extensive use of alternative temporalities and cognitive dissonance in previous works relating to the Troubles such as *Unearthed* (1988) and *None of It Matters* (1999). The videographic documentation of *Unearthed*, which was originally a performance, provides another perspective on the Troubles. *Unearthed* used the format of a slide presentation with the artist performing life. The images of masks dissolving into human faces and vice-versa were the haunting back-ground for the telling of stories that ranged from childhood memories to news coverage of political events and provided a way to understand differently what was going on in Northern Ireland. Declan McGonagle, recognizes the importance of artists in the process of unearthing the fundamentals that fed the political violence. McGonagle credits the work of Cummins as well as the impact of Feminism within art practice and discourse for their ability to displace notions of power.

It was, I would argue, this expansion of what was possible, a wider inclusive imagining, formally and, crucially, in terms of content, which provided a new dynamic in art making and its experience within which Pauline Cummins conceived and produced the piece, 'Unearthed' and other related works.³

Between One and Another rethinks the mutability of identity with the fallibility of the body. In other words, the artists offer displacements in the field of subjectivity by providing effective encounters that generate a space for resilient aesthetics. In *Between One and Another*, resilience is best understood as a cyclical process, a reparative impulse and a capacity to recover from adversity. Cummins and Vida are 'threshold people' who invite us to become one another, to move from convention to other forms of self-expression by reconceptualizing temporal and spatial situations in order to experience alternative forms for being and belonging

References:

1. Carolyn Heilbrun, *Women's Lives: The View from The Threshold* as used in Vera Reid/book *Women Between*, a perceptive exploration of 'the self' in the work of four Canadian women artists.
2. Victor and Edith Turner, *Images and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture* also used by Vera Reid in *Women Between*.
3. Cliodhna Shaffey's exhibition text for *The Still Centre*.
4. Quoted from a description provided by Pauline Cummins.
5. Declan McGonagle. 'Unearthing....'Reflections on a moment in time and a work by Pauline Cummins, September 2009. . *Unearthed* was shown in the opening exhibition of the Irish Museum of Modern Art in Dublin when Declan McGonagle was curator. McGonagle is now director of National College of Art and Design, Dublin where Cummins also teaches.



ENTRE L'UNE ET L'AUTRE / CHANGEMENT RADICAL

Entre L'Une et L'Autre / Changement Radical rassemble, pour la première fois au Centre Culturel Irlandais (CCI) gallery à Paris, les travaux de deux artistes reconnues dans le milieu des arts médiatiques: Pauline Cummins et Sandra Vida. La première est irlandaise tandis que la seconde est canadienne d'origine écossaise. Le titre de l'exposition souligne la complicité entre les deux artistes ainsi que leur rapport avec leurs spectatrices(eurs). Une 'autre' est une de plus, une personne supplémentaire du même type que celui déjà pris en compte. Pauline Cummins et Sandra Vida invitent leurs spectatrices à considérer leurs œuvres entre elles avec le même respect exprimé par les artistes l'une pour l'autre. Cette invitation / exposition est un acte de reconnaissance mutuelle ou de rapprochement, une entreprise de collaboration qui nécessite à la fois une liberté d'esprit et une interaction généreuse. Pour Cummins et Vida, les compétences nécessaires pour satisfaire à ces deux conditions ont été perfectionnées pendant plus de vingt ans de collaboration régulière entre elles, ainsi que plus de trente ans d'activités professionnelles avec beaucoup 'd'autres'. Conséquemment, les propositions incarnées dans les œuvres vidéographiques soigneusement sélectionnées à partir de leur vaste répertoire, ainsi que la performance d'ouverture intitulée *Changement Radical*, spécialement conçue pour la cour du CCI, reflètent de nombreuses décennies d'expérience. Cummins et Vida espèrent que la découverte de points communs dans leurs vies et dans leurs œuvres trouvera un écho chez leurs spectatrices et incarnera aussi pour elles une redéfinition des possibilités qui s'offrent à toutes.

En tant que femmes artistes, féministes et militantes, Cummins et Vida peuvent être définies comme des 'personnes seuils'. Ces deux artistes ont développées une capacité de réinvention exceptionnelle dans des espaces liminaires. L'auteure féministe Carolyn Heilbrun utilise le concept de liminalité dans son application anthropologique plus large qui cherche à définir les 'personnes seuils'. Elle explique que « L'essence de la liminalité est révélée dans l'expérience des femmes une fois qu'elles sont prêtes à passer de la convention à une autre forme d'expression de soi. » ¹ Liminalité, du mot latin *limen*, implique un état subjectif, celui d'être entre

deux plans existentiels différents, d'être au 'seuil'. Victor Turner, un anthropologue de premier plan, explique la liminalité, la marginalité et l'inégalité systémique comme des conditions fréquemment employées dans la génération de mythes, de symboles, de rites, de systèmes philosophiques et d'œuvres d'art. Turner explique que ces formes culturelles nous fournissent des modèles de transition visant à renouveler nos relations avec les autres, la société, la nature et la culture. ² La prédilection des deux artistes pour la vidéo, la performance et l'installation, ainsi que leurs réactivations de mythes, de symboles et de rites celtes alimentent cette interprétation. Je propose que l'espace liminal ou transitionnel généré par les artistes induit une esthétique de la résilience. Chaque des œuvres présentées dans *Entre l'Une et L'Autre / Changement Radical* a un caractère plurivoque capable d'émouvoir à plusieurs niveaux psychobiologiques.

L'engagement des artistes envers les arts médiatiques, où le jeu temporel peut inciter une critique de la perception, où la transition peut être simultanément l'objet d'un travail ainsi que son sujet, permet la réunion de leurs convictions féministes, politiques et esthétiques. Comme beaucoup d'artistes féministes de leur génération, la première à accéder à une plus grande échelle les arts médiatiques, la performance et l'installation, ces choix sont en eux-mêmes une stratégie de résistance / résilience. Pour Cummins et Vida, les arts médiatiques et le féminisme sont des cadres complémentaires tant pour la vie et que pour le travail. Le cinéma, la vidéo et la performance féministes ainsi que le travail théorique féministe sur la représentation sont, parmi beaucoup d'autres, des résultats concrets du mouvement des femmes. Ces derniers sont devenus des outils efficaces pour la création de représentations qui déstabilisent les catégories dominantes, telles la féminité, la masculinité, la sexualité, l'espace et la politique. L'urgence politique du développement de la vidéo et de la performance féministes est pour les deux artistes un projet de vie. Leurs contributions dans ces domaines excèdent le cadre d'une seule exposition. *Entre L'Une et l'Autre/Changement Radical* présente une version condensée d'une très riche 'herstory'. Cette sélection d'œuvres est une invitation à la découverte d'une esthétique de la résilience, au partage d'un espace transitionnel ainsi qu'un appel à l'engagement dans des modalités inaccoutumées d'être dans le monde.

Sweeping Change / Changement Radical (performance d'ouverture)

La cour intérieure du CCI est un oasis de calme, néanmoins située en plein cœur du tumultueux quartier Latin. Ce contraste est autant une surprise pour les sens aujourd'hui, qu'autrefois lorsque les premiers irlandais en firent la visite en 1775. En outre, la découverte de deux femmes, totalement absorbées par des activités insolites qui sont pourtant étrangement familières, est tout à fait

inattendue dans ce sanctuaire paisible. Une d'elle déverse une énorme quantité de sel qui forme au sol un grand cercle. Elle est entièrement concentrée sur elle-même et sur la précision de ses gestes. Le cercle enfin formé, une autre femme s'approche. Elle a en mains une longue branche de bouleau feuillue avec laquelle elle procède à un balayage vigoureux de la cour. Comme le révèle la performance *Sweeping Change / Changement Radical*, Cummins et Vida accordent plus de poids à la connaissance issue de l'expérience quotidienne des femmes qu'au savoir dérivé de sources plus officielles. Ce faisant, elles affirment que l'expérience tacite des femmes devrait prendre sa place au centre de la culture, non en marge de cette dernière. Ce faire une place, revendiquer un espace, reste encore un geste radical pour les femmes, et le reflet de changements essentiels dans l'histoire du monde, y compris du CCI. Tout d'abord un séminaire, c'est seulement depuis les temps modernes que le programme du Collège assiste tout aussi bien les femmes que les hommes. Cummins et Vida avec leurs gestes symboliques revendiquent non seulement la place qui leur est due, elles purgent du même coup de balai radical, le site de toute exclusion historique des femmes. Cette performance est particulièrement poignante parce que le CCI est depuis son ouverture, un espace de liberté et d'ouverture en opposition contre la répression des étudiants et des prêtres irlandais catholiques. *Sweeping Change / Changement Radical* réaffirme l'obligation de vigilance des institutions qui ont le pouvoir de réévaluer leur mandat initial et clame la liberté comme un principe égalitaire.

***The Autonomous Eye / L'Oeil Autonome* (5:10 minutes, 1992, distribué en 1995)**

Présenté dans l'antichambre de la galerie, *The Autonomous Eye / L'Oeil Autonome* est le premier ouvrage vidéographique à accueillir les personnes qui entrent par la cour intérieure. Cette œuvre fut produite en 1992, alors que Cummins et Vida étaient artistes en résidence au Banff Centre, Banff, Canada. Les deux artistes avaient spécialement choisies cette résidence pour son thème, soit l'instabilité du sujet féministe, et pour sa directrice Christine Ross, une historienne d'art contemporain, spécialiste de la vidéo. La résidence provoqua de vives discussions centrées sur des questions telles que « comment peut on penser la mutabilité de l'identité par rapport à la faillibilité du corps? » et « comment construire une identité en dehors de la sphère patriarcale? » *The Autonomous Eye / L'Oeil Autonome* propose certaines pistes fertiles. Cummins et Vida prennent contrôle du regard et de la représentation, simultanément en tant qu'artistes, interprètes et vidéastes ou, dit différemment, elles sont à la fois le sujet et l'objet de leur collaboration. La nudité des deux artistes demeure insolite pendant qu'elles se filment l'une l'autre. Ce désarroi souligne que le nu féminin est la conséquence tout autant de la caméra, que de l'œil et de l'esprit. Le résultat est une mise en abyme déconcertante de cadrages, un jeu habile de réflexions avec des miroirs et une mise en scène déroutante de perspectives sans fin.

Traditionnellement, le domaine de la représentation a été défini pour les femmes par les hommes ; du stage du miroir de Lacan, au corps fétiche et fragmenté de Freud. *The Autonomous Eye / L'Oeil Autonome* invite les spectatrices à prendre en considération les limites de ces conventions et offre une nouvelle poétique de l'image qui prend en compte la difficulté d'être autonome. Ce travail de collaboration ne cherche pas à produire des représentations plus authentiques qui remplaceraient des représentations frauduleuses. Son sujet est le processus même de la représentation et la difficulté pour deux artistes féministes de produire des images entre les unes pour les autres. S'il n'y a pas de possibilité d'autonomie réelle, *The Autonomous Eye / L'Oeil Autonome* rappelle que l'émancipation peut néanmoins résider dans une prise de conscience de la façon dont toute représentation est construite, contrôlée et surveillée. Cette prise de conscience est illustrée très efficacement dans l'une des premières scènes. À l'arrière-plan, Cummins, nue, entre en scène et se place de profil devant la caméra d'enregistrement. Elle regarde l'écran moniteur hors scène, puis nonchalamment met ses lunettes pour mieux voir les images que Vida, située au premier plan, également nue, capture un miroir à la main. L'ensemble de la scène se déroule devant un très grand miroir sur pied qui englobe les deux artistes et double leurs propres réflexions. Ce jeu de regards, de miroirs et de caméra, se poursuit pendant toute la durée de *The Autonomous Eye / L'Oeil Autonome*. Ce travail est à la fois une enquête sur la vidéo comme médium à travers le corps de la femme et l'exploration du regard féministe par la vidéo. De façon appropriée, la scène finale présente les deux artistes comme une déesse à la tête dédoublée. Ou comme Cummins le suggère, la figure de Janus qui regarde à reculons et en avant simultanément.

***New Spin / Nouvelle Tournure* de Pauline Cummins (2 minutes: 31, 2010/2012) and *Elegy: a meditation on mortality / Élégie: une méditation sur la mortalité* de Sandra Vida (10 minutes en boucle, 2010)**

New Spin / Nouvelle Tournure de Pauline Cummins et *Elegy / Élégie* de Sandra Vida, appel à un examen comparatif puisque les deux œuvres sont projetées grand format et en succession sur le mur de fond de la galerie du CCI. Ces deux œuvres rejoignent plusieurs autres œuvres d'art contemporain qui fonctionnent comme des objets transitionnels et qui adressent des questions d'identité, de maladie et de bien-être. Jeanne Randolph fut la première critique d'art au Canada à adapter la théorie psychanalytique d'objet transitionnel de Donald Woods Winnicott (1896–1971.) Prenant comme point de départ les travaux du célèbre psychanalyste britannique, Randolph révisé l'interprétation freudienne classique de «l'art-comme-névrose» et propose «l'art-comme-objet-transitionnel». Winnicott souligne l'importance des objets comme symboles nourrissant l'imaginaire chez les enfants et plus tard chez les adultes dans la formation du moi. Randolph extrapole que les œuvres d'art sont des objets transitionnels sophistiqués créés par les artistes pour permettre aux



adultes d'interagir avec le monde. A la suite de Winnicott et de Randolph, je propose qu' *Elegy / Élégie* et *New Spin / Nouvelle Tournure* sont effectivement des objets transitionnels, capables de générer un espace esthétique de résilience. L'espace transitionnel est selon Winnicott un lieu de repos psychique. Dans ces deux œuvres, cet espace est construit, entre autres, par l'utilisation du motif/symbole/thème du tourbillon comme passage d'un état à un autre.

Elegy / Élégie une méditation sur la mortalité, est un récit poétique qui explore la complexité et la vulnérabilité du moi intérieur et du corps extérieur en faisant référence à la physiologie et la pathologie humaine. Le point de départ de ce travail est une mésaventure personnelle. Immobilisée après un accident de vélo, Vida transforme son malheur en une composition vidéographique inspirante. *Elegy / Élégie* combine d'une manière consommée une variété de techniques d'animation. La compétence de Vida pour le collage et la stratification des images est une fois de plus mise à son service de façon éloquente. Par exemple, dans une scène, une roue de vélo tourne hors contrôle et évoque efficacement le terrible moment de l'accident. Par la suite, la roue se métamorphose lentement en des tourbillons merveilleux de couleurs qui symbolisent les cycles de la vie et le passage du temps. Dans les scènes ultérieures des images médicales de squelettes se superposent aux pieds, aux jambes et aux mains en mouvement de l'artiste. Tout au long de la composition, Vida emploie très efficacement sa silhouette animée comme une armature visuelle et comme un symbole de son voyage personnel. L'emploi par l'artiste de son propre corps à la fois comme personnage et comme sujet est une constante tout au long de sa carrière, à commencer par sa première installation avec ses autoportraits photographiques grandeur nature en 1985. Dans *Elegy / Élégie*, les silhouettes encadrent successivement des scènes tournées autour de son quartier ainsi que des images médicales. À intervalles réguliers, les mains de l'artiste apparaissent pour écrire, dessiner et feuilleter des livres médicaux et des carnets de croquis, offrant ainsi une vision à la première personne de ses activités de convalescence. Dans une autre scène, l'artiste soulève, une par une, les feuilles d'un modèle médical éducatif, créant ainsi un parallèle entre le processus de découverte progressif utilisé en l'art et en médecine. La méditation de Vida sur sa propre mortalité s'enchevêtre avec la mémoire de la maladie et du décès de sa mère. Le trio, passé, présent et futur, devient le motif d'accompagnement du tourbillon. Il est utilisé dans de nombreuses scènes: trois châssis de fenêtres, trois silhouettes, et trois images superposées. Les procédés vidéographiques et les étapes de la convalescence se confondent. La bande sonore soutient efficacement cette confusion; des notes de piano, des pulsations cardiaques, des cadences métronomiques et des alarmes médicales mettent l'accent sur le passage du temps. *Elegy / Élégie* est à la fois un hommage aux cycles de vie et aux étapes qui ont fait de Vida une artiste exceptionnelle. Les techniques vidéographiques et les procé-

dures de guérison médicale impliquent toutes deux des actions réparatrices. Vida coupe et rapièce tout comme la meilleure des chirurgiennes. La différence est que son opération de réparation et de préservation est réservée aux images. *Elegy / Élégie* est le travail d'un artiste accomplie qui joue d'une manière experte avec son médium.

New Spin / Nouvelle Tournure de Pauline Cummins est également une réflexion poétique à caractère cyclique. L'artiste utilise efficacement le tourbillon comme métaphore pouvant symboliser diverses révolutions. *New Spin / Nouvelle Tournure* se compose d'une édition récente de trois vidéos antérieures collectivement intitulées *The Still Centre* et d'abord présentées dans le cadre de l'exposition *Unbuilding*, organisée par Clíodhna Shaffrey pour le *Mermaid Art Centre*, Co. Wicklow, 2010. La nouvelle version débute par des images du paysage du comté de Wicklow, où vit Cummins, et la voix de l'artiste qui fredonne doucement une chanson, apparemment pour elle-même. Cummins apparaît soudainement et marche vers le centre d'une cour ensoleillée du 17^{ème} siècle où elle commence à tourbillonner sur elle-même les bras tendus, un peu comme un derviche tourneur. Grâce au montage d'images superposées, son image double et même triple, tandis que les tourbillonnements s'intensifient au point de rendre plausible l'envoi en orbite d'une copie d'elle-même. Celle-ci réapparaît sur une route de campagne en haut d'une colline où elle continue à tourbillonner éperdument en montage avancé-rapide. À son tour, cette copie orbitale en génère une autre. Maintenant située au bord du lac à Lacken, cette dernière incarnation, enveloppée dans une écharpe rouge flamboyant avec des poids attachés aux deux extrémités, poursuit les mouvements tourbillonnants. Ce cycle d'événements se répète à différentes vitesses dans plusieurs autres séquences dans la cour et sur la route au sommet d'une colline. L'effet général est que la figure et son environnement s'unissent dans un tourbillon de sensations instables, toujours en processus de formation, d'évolution et de régénération. L'analyse de Shaffrey de la matrice de *New Spin / Nouvelle Tournure*, *The Still Centre*, emprunte le concept phénoménologique de Maurice Merleau-Ponty du corps comme condition permanente de l'expérience:

The Still Centre présente une trilogie ensorcelante qui évoque un esprit insouciant et dynamique. Le petit personnage dans le paysage vaste et pittoresque suggère que nous sommes seulement une minuscule particule tourbillonnant dans un vaste monde, et pourtant, le sentiment d'être en harmonie et en accord avec l'univers est transmis par la présence à la fois comique et étrange de cette figure qui ne cesse de tourner sur elle-même.³

Dans *New Spin / Nouvelle Tournure*, le tourbillon devient la figure primordiale qui communique “la condition fondamentale de notre existence; nous sommes continuellement en orbite au plan moléculaire, à l’échelle personnelle, et planétaire.”⁴ *New Spin / Nouvelle Tournure* se termine lorsque l’artiste sort de la cour.

En même temps tournés vers l’intérieur tout en regardant vers l’extérieur, *New Spin / Nouvelle Tournure*, et *Elegy / Élégie* adoptent une gestuelle performative qui génère un régime de représentation vacillant entre l’objectivité et la subjectivité et transforment la perception de soi, ainsi que le regard de l’autre. Ce faisant, ces œuvres fonctionnent comme des objets transitionnels qui nous permettent d’imaginer de nouveaux modèles de représentation pour le développement personnel, social, médical, et spirituel. *Elegy / Élégie* et *New Spin / Nouvelle Tournure*, comme la plupart des expériences esthétiques, sont des propositions non didactiques. Les artistes créent un espace fondé sur une esthétique de la résilience où elles invitent leurs spectatrices à les rejoindre dans le déroulement d’histoires cycliques et sans limites fixes.

***Entrenched / Inébranlable* (5 minutes:18, nouvelle édition 2009, de 1999) et *Unearthed / Mettre à Jour* (19 minutes, 1988/90) de Pauline Cummins;**

***Threads / Fils* de Sandra Vida, (à l’origine une installation à trois moniteurs, 6 minutes, en boucle, 2007)**

Les œuvres *Entrenched / Inébranlable* et *Unearthed / Mettre à Jour* de Cummins, et *Threads / Fils* de Vida complètent la sélection de l’exposition. Les deux premières sont présentées chacune sur un moniteur avec casque d’écoute, alors que *Threads / Fils*, est une installation vidéo présentée sur deux écrans avec piste sonore unique. *Threads / Fils* a comme point de départ les ancêtres de Vida qui ont travaillé à Glasgow. Son arrière grand-mère et sa grand-tante ont toutes deux travaillées dans les filatures de coton, tandis que son arrière grand-père et son propre père ont trimé dans les chantiers navals. Les ancêtres de l’artiste permettent une vision plus personnelle de l’histoire de la main-d’œuvre et une analyse critique de la notion de progrès dans l’industrie et le commerce. Cette enquête individuelle révèle entre autres un rapprochement entre l’exploitation des ouvriers britanniques et des esclaves africains asservis à la production du coton. Les navires qui transportaient le coton de l’Amérique aux usines britanniques embarquaient au retour les esclaves africains nécessaires pour la cueillette du coton en Amérique. *Threads / Fils*, dans son nouveau format, déploie sur deux écrans un flot d’images et de sons envoûtants qui révèle l’histoire cachée de l’exploitation des travailleurs. Des images évocatrices d’énormes rouleaux de tissu s’enchaînent avec les images d’une rivière où l’eau coule abondamment et sont

jumelées avec des scènes où les mains de l'artiste enfilent le chas d'une aiguille ou allument des bougies. Par le biais de cette réinterprétation personnelle de son histoire ancestrale, Vida encourage une comparaison contemporaine et une analyse critique de l'exploitation croissante de la main-d'œuvre hors frontières. L'artiste emploie des stratégies analogues dans ses travaux antérieurs tel l'installation multimédia *...near where my great aunt was born...* (1992) dans laquelle habillée comme sa grand-tante, elle explore les rues de Glasgow en quête de l'histoire de son ancêtre. Ou encore dans l'installation vidéo *Triad* (1995) présentée sur trois écrans, où Vida faisant encore appel à son héritage écossais fait revivre par le biais d'une situation contemporaine un ancien mythe celtique.

Entrenched / Inébranlable, de Pauline Cummings, est une collaboration avec les artistes Krijnie Beyen (néerlandaise) et Breeda Mooney (irlandaise), présentée pour la première fois à l'exposition *Going Dutch*, Dublin, 1999. Cette œuvre laisse une impression pénible des conséquences quant aux positions inébranlables. Elle explore la relation entre deux femmes, incapables de réconciliation, vivant toutefois ensemble dans un environnement domestique modeste. Les deux décors principaux consistent en une pièce vide où les adversaires se battent pour la possession d'un châssis de fenêtre et une pièce avec pour seul décor une table et une chaise où elles se disputent à propos du placement de la chaise. La plupart des scènes sont présentées au ralenti alors que la piste sonore brouille le dialogue. Christine Ross théorise le montage vidéo au ralenti comme l'expression d'une temporalité alternative qui serait l'équivalent perceptif de la dépression. Dans son livre, *Aesthetics of Disengagement: Contemporary Art and Depression*, Ross analyse la manière dont certaines œuvres d'art vidéographiques reproduisent le sentiment de détachement associé à la dépression. Ross soutient que ces œuvres repensent l'intersubjectivité et la temporalité en s'appropriant le langage symptomatique de la dépression. Ross définit le désengagement comme un retrait notable, une protection radicale du moi contre l'autre, marqué par l'isolement, les ruptures de communication, et les gestes de rejet. Toutes ces caractéristiques sont incarnées par les deux adversaires imaginaires de Cummins. Ross soutient que certaines œuvres vidéographiques transmettent la nature de la dépression en reproduisant sa dissonance cognitive et du fait permettraient aux spectatrices de pratiquer un mécanisme de survie qui amènerait à une compréhension nouvelle de la dépression. Autrement dit, ces rencontres vidéographiques affectives offrent l'expérience de temporalités liées au retrait sur soi, non seulement comme anormales ou mal adaptées, mais aussi comme des pulsions de survie réparatrices. Fait révélateur, Cummins a utilisé régulièrement au montage le ralenti et l'avancé-rapide des images en association avec une dissonance cognitive dans ses travaux antérieurs tels *Unearthed* (1988) et *None of This Matters* (1999) qui ont comme sujet les

Troubles en Irlande du Nord. La documentation vidéographique de *Unearthed*, à son origine une performance, est un bon exemple. *Unearthed* emploie le format d'une présentation de diapositives en fondu enchaîné pendant que Cummins performe en direct sur scène. Des images de masques se dissolvent dans des images de visages humains et vice versa et forment la toile de fond de la narration d'histoires d'enfance personnelles entremêlées avec la couverture médiatique d'événements politiques. Cette juxtaposition offre un moyen de comprendre différemment ce qui se passait en Irlande du Nord. Declan McGonagle reconnaît l'importance des artistes féministes et du travail de Cummins dans le débusquement des principes fondamentaux qui ont alimenté la violence politique en Irlande.

C'était, je dirais, un élargissement de ce qui était possible, une capacité imaginaire plus généreuse et inclusive, formellement et fondamentalement en termes de contenu, qui fournit une nouvelle dynamique de l'art et son expérience, au sein de laquelle Pauline Cummins conçoit "Unearthed" et d'autres œuvres du même type.⁵

Entre L'Une et L'Autre / Changement Radical repense la mutabilité de l'identité en accord avec la faillibilité du corps. En d'autres termes, les artistes proposent des déplacements dans le domaine de la subjectivité et des rencontres qui génèrent une esthétique de la résilience. Dans cette exposition, la résilience est comprise comme un processus cyclique, une pulsion réparatrice et une capacité à se remettre de l'adversité. Cummins et Vida sont des femmes en transition qui invitent leurs spectatrices à devenir l'une l'autre, à passer de la convention à d'autres formes d'expression de soi, à réconceptualiser le temps et l'espace dans le but de faire l'expérience d'autres formes d'être et d'appartenance.

Références:

- 1 Carolyn Heilbrun, *Women's Lives: The View from The Threshold* dans Vera Reid's book *Women Between, a perceptive exploration of 'the self' in the work of four Canadian women artists*.
- 2 Victor and Edith Turner, *Images and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture* aussi utilisé par Vera Reid in *Women Between*.
- 3 Clíodhna Shaffrey, texte pour l'exposition *The Still Centre* (traduction auteur)
- 4 Citation provenant d'un courriel envoyé par Pauline Cummins, Février, 2012.
- 5 Declan McGonagle. 'Unearthing....'Reflections on a moment in time and a work by Pauline Cummins, Septembre 2009.

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UNEARTHING....'

Reflections on a moment in time and a work by Pauline Cummins.

Once upon a time an English journalist contacted me, when I was the Director of the Irish Museum of Modern Art, in Dublin, immediately after the declaration of the first IRA ceasefire in 1994 to ask 'what were all the Irish artists going to do now that the Troubles were over.' Like others, that journalist was making the easy mistake of thinking that the meaning of the mix of political and social actions known as the Troubles lay in the visible phenomena of physical violence and its manifestations in paramilitary and security force activity across Northern Ireland. And, somehow, as was then anticipated, if street violence and its support mechanisms were reduced or coming to an end then the 'Irish Troubles' were over.

In answering that journalist's question I tried to make him understand that while the phenomena of violence may well disappear from the streets of Northern Ireland, and elsewhere – though even today we know it hasn't completely disappeared – our actual troubles were only just beginning. And only at that point would societies, North and South of the border, be able to begin to deal with deep seated issues of identity, power and powerlessness, socio-political division and mythmaking which had fed the politics of place and fuelled the landscape of violence which developed with particular intensity from 1968/9 on.

I make the point about the journalist to illustrate how little of value a focus on the phenomena of our condition, as Irish/British people, contributed to any new thinking about that condition or how we could negotiate an exit from the cul de sac that the Troubles represented. Yet it was literary practitioners – initially – then some, but only some, visual artists along with a small number of political thinkers who first understood the necessity of looking beyond the drama, the phenomena, to understand what was happening in [Northern] Ireland at that time. They seemed to understand that an 'unearthing' was necessary. Interestingly we also know now that some convicted paramilitaries, who had started long prison sentences in the 1970s, also realised that there would be no end and no new begin-

ning if underlying ideas/issues – the reservoir of meaning, which fed the political violence – were not unearthed, named and addressed. Their sense of what was necessary, that is, an unearthing of the fundamentals underlying and feeding the drama, was crucial in establishing the cease-fires on both sides which ultimately facilitated the progress of the peace process which has, in turn, raised many new questions.

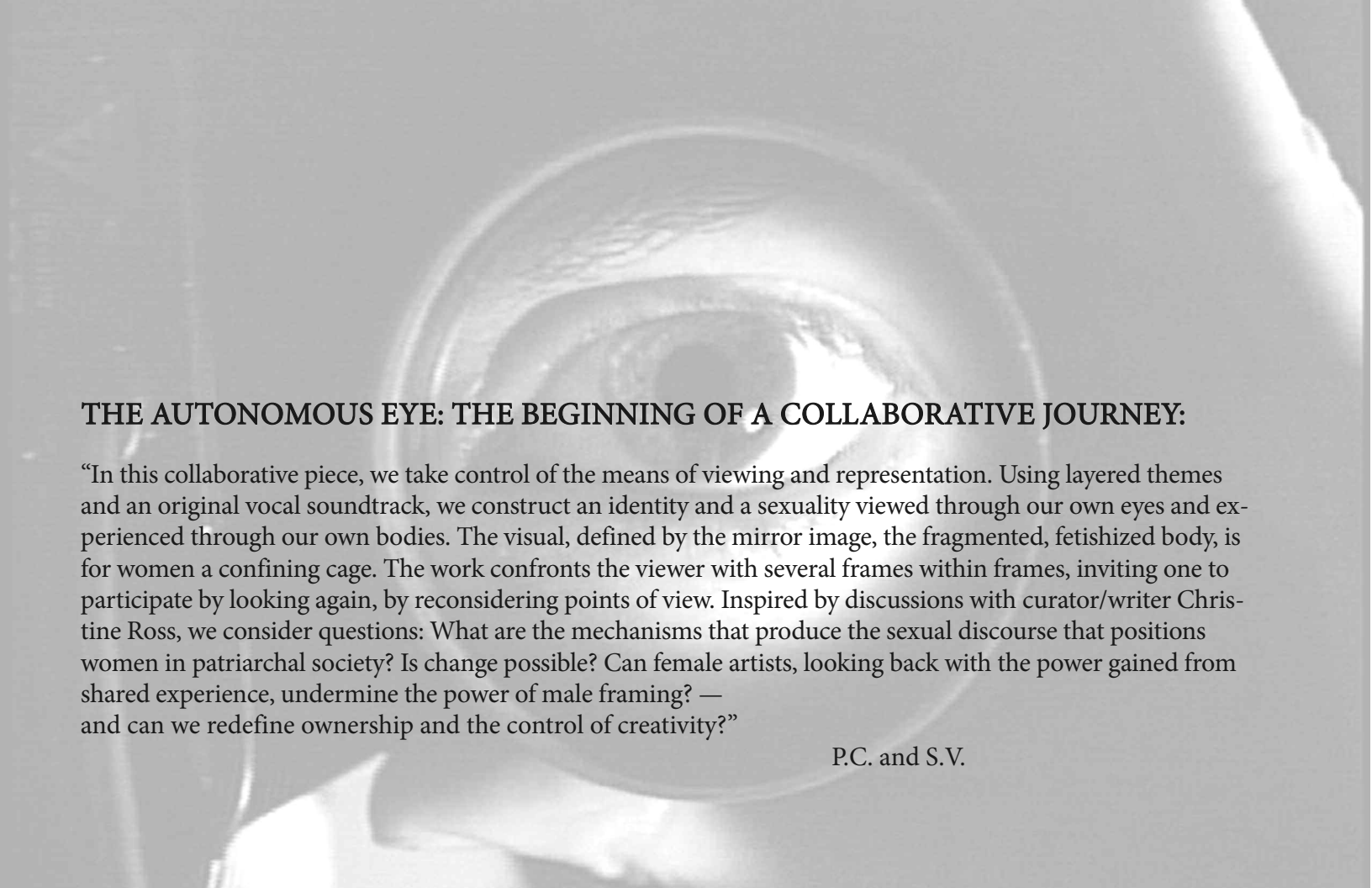
It is also interesting to me, as someone who worked in an art gallery in Derry in the period of the late 1970s and into the 80s, to observe that the few visual artists, along with the few writers, who were weaving a fabric of questioning, were actually foregrounding issues of power and powerlessness and how these conditions were crystallized and reified by socio-cultural memory and political mythmaking. By politics, in this sense, I mean the organisation of power in society. Responding to and reflecting on the reasons for the phenomena of the Troubles, in the context of Northern Ireland, made the process of addressing notions of power, therefore, unavoidable, in general terms. In my view, in the Republic of Ireland, the artists who were engaging similar issues of principle, [viz.] foregrounding issues of power and powerlessness which also underlay society in the South of Ireland but which were articulated in different phenomena, were those who made gender and gender relations the subject of their work. These were mostly women artists, who explored conditions in the present through the lens of memory and myth from the past. What, arguably, made that possible, in that period, was the intersection of time and Feminism within art practice and discourse, coming out of the 1970s. It was, I would argue, this expansion of what was possible, a wider inclusive imagining, formally and, crucially, in terms of content, which provided a new dynamic in art making and its experience within which Pauline Cummins conceived and produced the piece, 'Unearthed' and other related works. The significance of this, in Ireland, as a whole, lay in going behind the phenomena of place [any place] and time [any moment in time] to name and share meanings on another level of common human experience altogether.

In engaging this principle of deep understanding – buried, you could almost say – and combining it with contemporary form, in the present, makes the work, 'Unearthed', revelatory.

Declan McGonagle, September 2009

Unearthed was shown in the opening exhibition of the Irish Museum of Modern Art in Dublin when Declan McGonagle was curator. McGonagle is now director of National College of Art and Design, Dublin, where Cummins teaches.

Unearthed fut présenté au Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin pendant la tenure de Declan McGonagle comme commissaire d'expositions. McGonagle est maintenant le directeur du National College of Art and Design, Dublin, où Cummins enseigne.



THE AUTONOMOUS EYE: THE BEGINNING OF A COLLABORATIVE JOURNEY:

“In this collaborative piece, we take control of the means of viewing and representation. Using layered themes and an original vocal soundtrack, we construct an identity and a sexuality viewed through our own eyes and experienced through our own bodies. The visual, defined by the mirror image, the fragmented, fetishized body, is for women a confining cage. The work confronts the viewer with several frames within frames, inviting one to participate by looking again, by reconsidering points of view. Inspired by discussions with curator/writer Christine Ross, we consider questions: What are the mechanisms that produce the sexual discourse that positions women in patriarchal society? Is change possible? Can female artists, looking back with the power gained from shared experience, undermine the power of male framing? — and can we redefine ownership and the control of creativity?”

P.C. and S.V.

The Autonomous Eye has been seen widely and used as a resource in art theory classes in Ireland, Canada, and the United States, yet for three years after its production in 1993, the artists felt reticent to distribute it widely. The strategic position it embodied, a resistance to “the male gaze,” raised issues of how it might be viewed or contextualized.

The Autonomous Eye was produced in a specific context and era (the early 90s): it was developed as a collaborative project by the two artists during a feminist residency at The Banff Centre in Banff, Alberta, Canada, *where, along* with over 20 other international women artists, they investigated a variety of issues considering women’s art production and the evolving nature of feminism. Attitudes subtly changed over time, and the artists felt ready to release the video in 1995.

While *The Autonomous Eye* was the first project that brought the artists together on a specific art work, Cummins and Vida have supported and encouraged each other’s work in a collaborative context for over 20 years. They first met at a conference (*Where To?*) in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, in 1991, which examined concepts of marginality. Seeing many similarities in each other’s work, and sharing experience as heterosexual feminists, they continued to explore similar themes in their ongoing practice. They have both spent fruitful residency periods at both The Banff Centre and the Tyrone Guthrie Centre at Annaghmakerrig, Ireland, where they worked on individual as well as joint projects.

Pauline assisted Vida with additional camera work on two major projects, both filmed in Ireland: *Triad* (1996) and *Bower* (2007). In 1996, both artists were invited for a residency at two locations in Canada: Manitoba Artists for Women’s Art, Winnipeg, and Articule Gallery, Montreal. In 2002, they received grants to travel in both Canada and Ireland to carry out research for an exhibition of Irish and Canadian video art. They visited Calgary, Banff, Montreal, and Toronto in Canada; Dublin, Ireland and Belfast Northern Ireland; as well as viewing preview copies of selected video works sent from video distribution centres and individual artists at their request. This culminated in a successful exhibition, *Locus Suspectus*, which was shown in Belfast, Northern Ireland at the Ormeau Baths gallery, and in Canada at Truck Contemporary Art in Calgary, and Paved Media Art gallery in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Two publications were produced about that exhibition.

PAULINE CUMMINS

Chronology of Major Art Works (selected)



- 1990 **INIS OIRR/ARAN DANCE**
A series of slide dissolves merging the idea of Aran knitting with a woman's desire
- 1988/90 **UNEARTHED**, premiere at inaugural exhibition for the Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin
Installation and performance reflecting on the Troubles from a personal viewpoint
- 1992 **SOUNDING THE DEPTHS**; with Louise Walsh, collection of IMMA, Dublin
Two women enact liberating actions through projections on their bodies along with images of teeth and shells with sounds of women's voices and clicking teeth.
- *1992 (released 1995) **THE AUTONOMOUS EYE** with Sandra Vida, The Banff Centre
- 1996 **BECOMING BELOVED**, video installation, Hermitage of Maria Magdaleina, Lanzarote
- 1999 **NONE OF IT MATTERS**, commissioned by Tryskel Art Centre in Cork
Performed live to the viewing audience in the cinema while the artist remained hidden in the projection box; made in response to the aerial bombings of Belgrade shown live on TV.

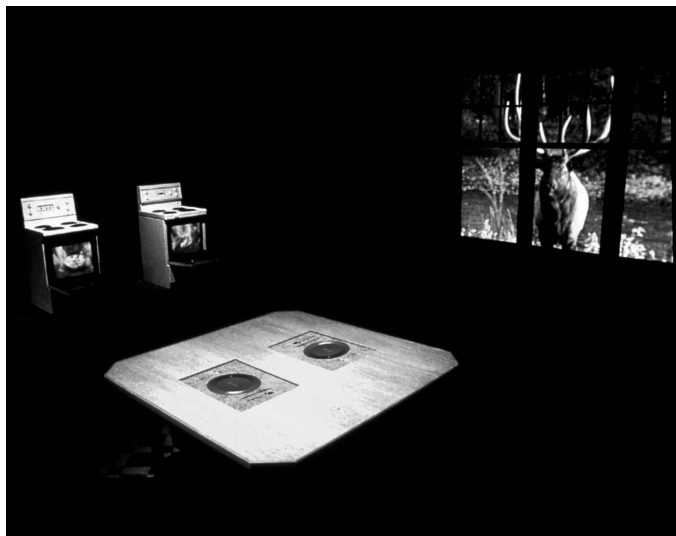
- 1999 **ENTRENCHED**; performative video of two women asserting claims to space; Tulca, Galway.
Entrenched is about people who hang on to the same routine, unable to agree, unable to walk away. It is also about political situations, where a little give could make such a difference, where fear and memories of the past prevent change. Entrenched is about the hollowness of victory, it is about us all.
- 2000 **HOLY GROUND**; with Frances Mezzetti, Sandra Johnston, Breeda Mooney and Fergus Byrne; *Outdoor performance in the 111th century ruins of St. Saviours, Glendalough, Wicklow*
- 2007 **JOKES AROUND THE WORLD**, The Energetic Humourists, with Krijnie Beyen and Tine Munk; presented as part of Den Haag Sculptuur, (The Hague Sculpture)
Street project in which people on the street were asked whether they would like to hear a joke, or if they have a joke to tell, a work about sharing with strangers.
- 2009 **WALKING IN THE WAY**; with Frances Mezzetti, performed on streets of Edinburgh and Dublin
Performed on Father's Day June 2009. Mezzetti and Cummins dressed as men spent an hour in the street placing a bet in the bookies, popping into the pub, loitering and watching unobserved. Second phase performed on Mother's Day, Sunday 14th March, in which the artists re-enacted the performance 'dressed as women', a very different experience.

SOUND THE ALARM, performance with video, for Open Space, BC, Canada

A 45-minute performance with sound and video elements that deals with the question of power / powerlessness. It explores visually and aurally the feelings that attend the loss of innocence for the individual, and for a society.

- 2010-2012 **THE STILL CENTRE / NEW SPIN** arose from a performance for Out of Site festival, Dublin; a new edit of three videos was shown in the exhibition *Unbuilding 2009*, collectively entitled *The Still Centre*, for Mermaid Art Centre, Co. Wicklow; awarded a special projects award by the Irish Arts Council.
The artist has engaged in physically spinning in a ritualistic manner at specific sites for over two years; shot in locations near Cummins home in the Blessington mountains.

SANDRA VIDA Chronology of Major Art Works (selected)



1984 of **3 DAYS & 3 NIGHTS IN 3 MINUTES**, project of Calgary Society of Independent Filmmakers

First media work in Super-8 animation; portrays the artist's working daytime life and nightly dream life.

1985 **SELF-PORTRAITS/SPLIT PERSONALITIES**, two-person show at Centre Eye Gallery, Calgary

Large-scale photos, collage, sound; portraying four stages of the artist's life.

1988 **PROJECTED IMAGES**, Special Production Project, premiere at CSIF, Calgary

Animated Super-8 film; great works of art history seen through a woman viewer's eyes.

1989 **FIXING THE PRICE**, presented at Raum-F artist space, Zurich, Switzerland

Three related performances exploring aspects of contemporary life

1989 **BODIES OF FATE, DIALOGUE...
TO BE CONTINUED, ANGELUS INTIMUS**

Videotapes shown in national and international venues; three video works that explore fate and relationships.

	"...NEAR WHERE MY GREAT AUNT WAS BORN...", created for Muttart Gallery, Calgary <i>Installation including large photographs, three video elements and framed video stills that document a journey of discovery to recuperate a lost element of personal history.</i>		
*1992 (released 1995)	THE AUTONOMOUS EYE with Pauline Cummins, The Banff Centre		2005 BOWER, premiere at EMMedia, Calgary; featured in Works festival, Edmonton Installation with digital prints, two video projections (one on a low platform); <i>Examining the changing role of women in the Middle Ages, and how that legacy still affects contemporary life.</i>
1995	TRIAD, three-channel video installation, premiere at ArtWalk, Calgary <i>A contemporary situation is pictured, referencing Celtic legend and the father-daughter paradigm.</i>		2007 THREADS, premiere at EMMedia, Calgary; featured in Works festival, Edmonton Installation with digital collages, three video projections, two on suspended cloth, sound <i>Based on personal and cultural history, this work reflects on global labour issues.</i>
2000	KITCHEN FREEDOM, premiere at Nickle Arts Museum, Calgary Installation with digital prints, linoleum floor, stoves and table with inset monitors, window with rear projection, ceramic pots, dresses and aprons, radio, 2 sound tracks; <i>50's kitchen images and objects are combined with "subversive" images from Celtic tradition, suggesting historical and contemporary alternatives for women.</i>		2010 ELEGY: A MEDITATION ON MORTALITY, premiere at Quickdraw Animation, Calgary <i>An abstracted, layered composition that combines live video with a variety of animation techniques; Considers the basic human experience of bodily fragility and the inevitability of death. Moving beyond this inherently melancholy theme, the artist expresses an affirmative engagement with the cycle of life.</i>
			2012 JOURNEY (in progress) <i>A multi-media installation reflecting on the progress of life, through video combined with animation.</i>



PAULINE CUMMINS

Pauline Cummins is an artist whose work explores the human condition from a feminist perspective. Her interest lies in performance and video work where she examines identity, gender and socio-cultural relations connected to different communities in the society. Her examination of locations questions how the self is constituted and how people act within a group either chosen or determined in social situations such as work, education, leisure time “social activities” or the basic structure of the family.

Pauline Cummins attended National College of Art, Dublin, during its turbulent years of Mao-influenced ‘continuous revolution’ and lockouts (1967–1970), which profoundly influenced her work strategies. She moved from painting to photography, performance, sound work and video installations, during the 80s. She was the founding chairperson of the Women Artists Action Group, (WAAG), which from 1987 to 1991 organized exhibitions and conferences in Ireland, and promoted exchange and dialogue internationally.

She was the first visual artist to work with prisoners in Mountjoy’s Women’s Prison in a scheme initiated by the Dept. Of Justice and the Irish Arts Council in 1986. She has had video installations commissioned for the Neo-natal unit, National Maternity Hospital, Dublin, 1995 and with Fire Station artist’s studios for ‘Inner Art’ where her video installations were shown in Confession Boxes in 1997. Her work has been exhibited internationally and is in the permanent collection of the Museum of Modern Art Dublin. She has recently renewed a strong commitment to performance that is collaborative, improvised, durational and live, working with The Performance Collective based in Dublin since 2009. She presented her new video work and performance, *Sound the Alarm 4*, in Victoria, Canada, in September 2010. She took part in *Right Here Right Now* Irish Performance Art in Kilmainham Jail in 2011, and plans 14 days of live performance with The Collective at the Galway Arts Centre, during the Galway Arts Festival in 2012.

SANDRA VIDA

Sandra Vida's work often embodies an activist impulse, and is based in social issues, especially related to the changing role of women within society. She was born in Calgary and studied English literature as well as Art and Psychology at the University of Calgary. Her work over the past three decades has included photo-based collage, performance, film, video and installation that investigate a range of issues from the perspective of how the personal and political are intertwined.



Vida was an early pioneer in the use of the colour photocopier and continues to explore digital collage in combination with video. Recently she has focused on multi-media installation that includes aspects of sculpture, sound, and video projection. Exhibitions of these works include *Kitchen Freedom* at the Nickle Arts Museum in 2000, *Bower* in the CampSites exhibition at the Walter Phillips Gallery in Banff in 2005, and *Threads*, with a premiere at EMedia in Calgary, and a feature exhibition in The Works Festival in Edmonton in 2010. A book about her art career was recently produced by EMedia, titled *Sandra Vida: vision and voice*. She returned to film animation with her most recent work, *Elegy* that combines live video with a variety of animation techniques in 2010.

In addition to her art practice, Vida is known for her dedication to other artists through Calgary's artist-run centres and as an advocate for the arts regionally and nationally. She has appeared as a speaker at conferences and her writing has been published in national magazines and catalogues. As coordinator of The New Gallery for over a decade, and as an independent curator, she has facilitated a wide variety of creative projects. She has been nominated twice for a Governor-General's visual and media arts award, received the Epcor Established Arts award at the Mayor's Luncheon for Business and the Arts, and was one of three finalists for Alberta's first Marion Nicoll Visual Art award.

MIREILLE PERRON



Mireille Perron was born in Montréal, Québec. Since 1982, her installations have appeared in solo and group exhibitions in Canada, Europe and the United States. She is the founder of the Laboratory of Feminist Pataphysics. LFP promotes social experiments that masquerade as artworks/events. She has also written and published on a variety of subjects related to representation. Most recent examples of the range of her work include, *The Laboratory of Feminist Pataphysics presents Ateliers of the Near Future*, a collaborative exhibition, Stride Gallery, Calgary, 2010, *Utopic Impulses: Contemporary Ceramics Practice*, Ronsdale Press, 2008, an anthology co-edited with Ruth Chambers and Amy Gogarty and *Medical Tabulae: Visual Arts and Medical Representation*, co-edited with Dr. Allister Neher, a thematic issue for *RACAR* vol.XXXIII,1-2,2008. She lives and works in Calgary, Alberta, where she teaches at the Alberta College of Art & Design.

Contact Information:

Mireille Perron
Mireille.perron@acad.ca
FAX: (403) 289-6682
Phone: (403) 210-3321
Alberta College of Art and Design
1407 – 14 ave. N.W.
Calgary Alberta T2N 4R3





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