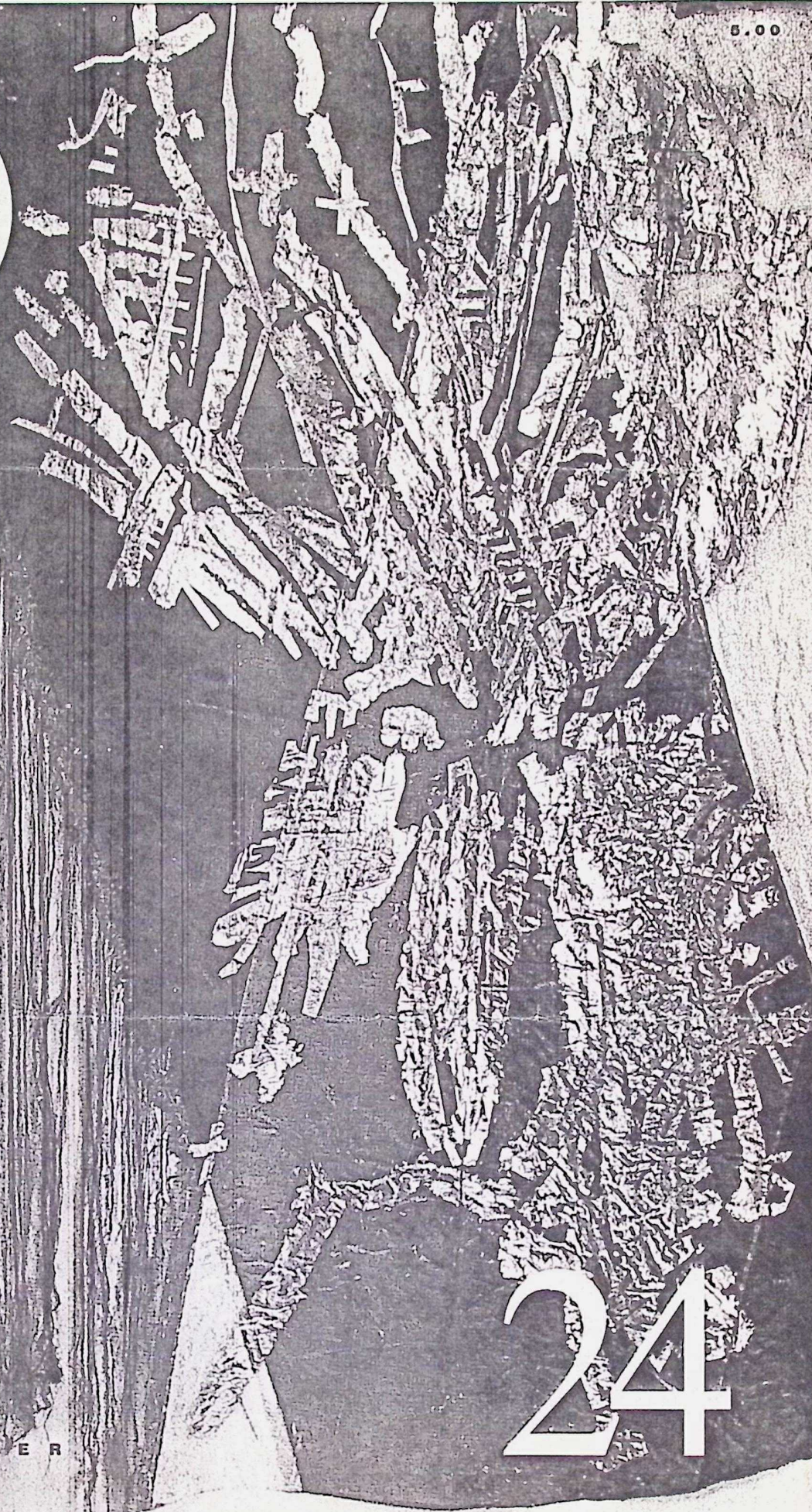


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artist from a Buffalo construction site. The box-like framing devices that hold the holograms well away from the wall are constructed of non-art materials. Crating wood, pieces of metal sheet and industrial mesh are layered suggesting geological striations. These materials apposed without comment form a kind of history — a foreshortened metaphor for the real time accretion of mingled cultural and natural elements. The holographic images reinforce the notion of probing. They float as if suspended in water rising from some historical core of the Niagara Region. Their metallic spectrum seems ominous in a science-fictional way. On the other hand, Petric's handling of the wood and metal surfaces references touch, magic and a map of moral choices for the viewer. The ritualized wounding and healing of these surfaces with olive oil, tar, beeswax and kresote signal the atavistic roots of his art-making practise not just as a revealer of relationships among natural materials, but as a healer who transforms his observations of the natural into guiding symbols, which unify rather than fracture meaning. "Puncturing the Horizon" further articulates a map of moral action that Petric outlined in his 1988 installation/ performance, *Phallo/Arc Autolysis*: observation, acknowledgement, interference, healing.

Petric continually questions the hegemony of the visual, as the worked surfaces of the framing devices attest. Yet the clue to the hidden map is for the eyes: the surveyor's tripod charts a night darkness broken only by the glow of the holograms. The setting reminded me of the night pilot in St. Exupéry's *Vol de Nuit* describing the welcome sight of lights marking human habitation far below. There, as here, the specks represent beacons of hope in what, for St. Exupéry, was a perilous isolation. For Petric, night marks the site of atrophied senses, particularly, and ironically, the visual. The mailer sent out to advertize "Puncturing the Horizon" depicts a cityscape by night over which the word "SENSINC" is stencilled in braille characters. The sighted are blind. The coordinates of the map which Petric is laying out are not physical, by metaphysical, transtemporal.

The motif of blindness appears again in the sighting element that stands off to one side, in the middle of the gallery floor. The surveyor's tripod reads as old, but also because one of its legs has been repeatedly splinted, as heroic. The baritone horn's bell and mouthpiece have been removed and the small end extended, twisted and stretched into an antenna. On the side of the large end Petric has punched the alphabet in braille; not the closure of an encoded message, but the reinvestment in what is here a generic representation of a whole lost system for making meaning.

Through these punctures, which ironically represent not a fissuring but a unifying of meaning, the encoded bleeps and dit-dahs of layered radio messages issue, unexpected sounds from a musical instrument. Both receiver and transmitter, the sighting element is fitted with a lens that peers at the holograms. Part shaman, part strange laser gun, it stands in readiness to sound a wall-shattering blast.

The five holograms represent five sites on a metaphysical map. In spite of their extreme technology, their ritual imagery buffered by the antique frames makes them appear more than simply old. Laser technology allows them primal space and mythopoetic presence, as Petric juxtaposes different combinations of ritual and science. The first, a shrivelled apple bound in wire and caught helplessly in mid-swing, seems to mix Petric's Catholic heritage with ecological concerns, alluding perhaps to collective experiences of victimization. Could it be a reprise of the biblical notion of man's "fortunate fall" from grace and the birth of logos from eros, circumspection from innocence? Or is it more simply nature throttled by technology? The second, quoted ambiguously from antiquated songs of continuity and fertility, is a wreath of cast-off snakeskins, referencing both the uroboros (antique archetype of infinity) and the farandole (a provençal circle dance of fertility). Or again, could it be a wreath laid before the imminent grave of nature? Ancient songs of life and death? In the central image, a fox skull appears, the sites of its breathing and hearing ritually connected by surgical tubing looping and knotted in the nose and out one ear in a rite of resuscitation. Next, a conch shell on a ground of wire mesh, which traces patterns like light through water, informs the viewer of a prehistory of the gallery site. Finally, an equine jawbone held by blacksmith's pliers,

belonging to the artist's grandfather, engages the ambiguously charged working relationship of man and domesticated nature — rites of survival, cruelty or blind egocentricity — while implicating the artist in a personal history of guilt.

Each frame carries a blank title plate made of thick steel, but without title, referring to a specific history of western artmaking while avoiding closure on the mythic language that Petric nurtures here.

"Puncturing the Horizon" is a metaphorically rich installation of ambiguous scope. Its elements work well separately even while their collective effect resists our ability to apprehend the show's epic nature.

Peter Gibson

**WORLD WIDE SKIN DEEP
PRESENTATION HOUSE
VANCOUVER**

The processed environment of modern communications is as topographical as it is technological. The title of the collaborative video installation, "World Wide Skin Deep," seems to play on this premise. The title suggests the resubordination of communication technology "world wide" to a conscious human praxis "skin deep." But the suggestiveness of "skin deep," its general usage, cites a reference to the superficial: it's only skin-deep. This title also rings, probably unintentionally, of a Baudrillardian simulation of the universal and the particularized. It recollects a dimension in time and space that has miniaturized our exchanges into a succession of "micros." Thus the body, landscape, time, all progressively disappear as "scenes." But the title as actualized by the exhibition, rather than *vice versa*, praises a



GUILLERMO GOMEZ PEÑA & EMILY HICKS; Photo: courtesy Presentation House.

renunciation of this very obliteration by attempting a revitalization of experiential and symbolic communication.

In the gallery, each of six monitors is marked by the name of a city: Bangkok, Berlin, Calgary, Jerusalem, London, Mexico City. Thus the city provides a frame for reception:

Each station simulated a city by emitting layered and fractured radio sounds and street pictures taken from that place. Out of this scatter of audio and visual stimuli, the viewer sees and hears that which he recognizes on the basis of his own personal proclivities and sensibilities.

(press release)

The "other spaces" of the monitors raise the problematic complexities of our immersion in mass-mediated experience, which overrides more subjective constructs. The work consists of the personal representations of a group of artists located world wide. The participating artists, known for multi-disciplinary activities, include: Brett Turnbull (London), Champon Apisuk and Kamol Phaosavasdi (Bangkok), Esther Shalev-Gez and Jochen Gez (Jerusalem), Guillermo Gómez-Peña and Emily Hicks (Mexico City), Myra Davies (Calgary) and Thomas Marquard (Berlin). Each artist was asked to submit slides accompanied by a sound track taken from radio stations. The slides were "composed" as a slide dissolve, then transferred to video (six minutes each) for ease of circulation to galleries. The sound track is saturated with talk and music as stations merge and overlap in their identification of the urban environment, the "imaging" through language, and of the disparities of languages juxtaposed to the international use of English within a popular music context. The transfer of the slide dissolve to video does little to serve the work. The curatorial intention of each "station" simulating a city remains largely dysfunctional when viewed as a contrast to what might have been a more imagistic vision of "space" within the unaltered slide dissolve of representations of city environments.

This project was produced by Myra Davies and, as noted above, it included her own city, Calgary. The space of Calgary, like that of Bangkok as presented by artists Apisuk and Phaosavasdi, gave the viewer a juxtaposition of the modern and the traditional: gigantic corporate skyscrapers of Bangkok (Is this the Siam Commercial Bank cited as providing support for the project?) and the multi-textured culture of an indigenous market economy; the architecture of oil boom Calgary and the revived native heritage.

Marquard's representations of Berlin privilege a private world of friendship

against the inhumanity of past histories. A consciousness of the "personal" pervades over the distancing of public monuments; the architecture of Berlin recedes behind a human praxis.

The remaining work assures us of other possibilities of a particular cultural, political and philosophical perspective in defining the "space." Shalev-Gez and Gez's view of Jerusalem holds a spiritual intent and, inverting images of the landscape, an abstract disavowal of the generic representations so common to the mass media. Privileging the heritage of spirituality and cultural/natural form over economic and political (military) strife, Jerusalem is a meditative recollection of desire. London, a city with an imperial past, still clings to vestiges of glory and those same conditions are now local inequalities. In Turnbull's work, images recollecting England's imperialistic history are compounded by the economic realities and poverty of the present; the music of the heroic past challenges the "comforts" of contemporary popular sounds. The sociological components of the old and the new, the agreeable and the subversive, are extended in Gómez-Peña and Hick's collection of "imaging" immersed within a corresponding reflection of sound and voice. Mexico City, the great Oedipal city, is portrayed as a configuration of theological ritual, the sensuous carnivalesque and the contemporary mutations of popular mythology.

The work, as a whole, shows that our basic perceptions and interpretations have been technologically textured by the images of the mass media. The question is raised as to whether our prior experience of the representations of international (worldwide) media communication moves us closer towards a mass-mediated embodied world. And, as such, do the distancing and the closeness in the title specify a form of experience? This immersion in mass-mediated experience is never clear and demands clarification, which can perhaps be acquired by returning the "givens" of the exhibition. The processed environment of communication technology is a reflection on the interplay of commercial, cultural and social relations within which we posit the individual. A grasp of the self, as encompassed by the work, is reliant on a mode of apprehension that is equally cultural, social and political. Here, the mode of audio and visual appropriation — taking photographs and recording radio sounds — is textured and layered in interpretive strategy; but it does not let the viewer forget that the polemic of "world wide" experience is also one haunted by technology and power.

Engaging other "spaces" remains a dynamic between technology and culture, economy and landscape — of working out the meaning of experience. And we can

view this project as specifically Canadian in this approach.

a courageous, and creative, struggle to think outside of and against the closed horizons of technological society. The Canadian mind seeks to preserve, if only in memory, those valuable aspects of experience which have been obliterated by the technological experience; or, alternatively, to emancipate technology from within by rethinking the meaning of science and technology.

Arthur Kroker

Technology and the Canadian Mind

Looking into other spaces is, then, both a lack and a revitalization of cultural and aesthetic vision within historical commercial and political developments. Perhaps this exhibition establishes a connection, if it does not examine the problematic, between a technological humanism and a technological dependency.

The curatorial premise sets out, if we accept technical "realism" as extending within the work, information within a human experience. The visual effect does indeed constitute the means to organize a spatial continuum as the perception of six urban environments. But the commonality, visual technology (mass media), whether by media literacy or by homogenization, has structured urban environments as containing elements of uniformity. The images reveal the signification of cultural modernization: the high-tech corporate design of skyscrapers and the patterns of a vernacular culture, the icons of "progress" and conditions of deprivation, the visual landscape of mass culture and the traditions of history and its architecture. Extending the visual, it is by radio, as the soundscape of the airwaves, that a pattern emerges seemingly integral to the exhibition's premise as a global membrane.

The work in this exhibition has an indispensable quality to it when we examine the urban experience. The traditional and the contemporaneous do not remain as elements of juxtaposition but, like cultural forms, constitute an aesthetic and social integration. Cultural images of the urban landscape are compositions which seem to emerge from the partial destruction of preceding cultural codes or residues of past histories. The popular, the erotic, the religious, machismo are composed as the social within the commercial, but are also recuperated as the blasphemous and sub-cultural. The culture of a changing society is identified as commercial forms, street politics and urban decay. This perception of the intense sociological component of Mexico City has been successfully interplayed with a sound track that instills an awareness of dynamic transformations.

Petra Rigby Watson