

## INSIDERS

This piece was developed in response to the increasing charges of insider trading across the country, and worked out in relation to a corporate portrait by Rembrandt, that dramatizes the human vices of greed and deceit.

Within the context of V.S.E. listings, two figures are first engaged and then interrupted in the transfer of an envelope. The envelope is held with great attention, suggesting that its contents contain sensitive information.

Insider trading occurs when a person either sells or purchases stock(s) while possessing knowledge about the future moves of a public company before that information has been publicly revealed. Insider trading basically produces unfair advantage within the stock market system, as knowledge of future changes in the company can affect its stock value.

The sequential imagery of "Insiders", is based on Rembrandt's Syndics of The Drapers Guild, 1661, which critically portrays the Directors as they ponder the books of the guild. Their deceitful and pious expressions suggest their procurement of personnel profits at the expense of the guild members. Rembrandt at the time of the commission was being forced into bankruptcy and his distrust of those who control the flow of money is slipped into the Syndics portrait.

The scene where the two corporate figures are, as it were, 'caught in the act', implies that they have been taken by surprise by the opening of a door in their office. The standing figure, at this point, locks the envelope under his arm and stares violently in

the direction of the camera-door-viewer alignment. The picture invites the viewer directly into the action of the composition, (by being the implied conscience at the door), and thus acts to stir each viewer's ethical position on investment ventures.

## RECONSTRUCTION: THE CO-OP

Within the city, and framed by the dominant dynamics of free market capitalism, housing is another opportunity for extraction with inevitable displacement. In this arena of constant change, stable forms of ownership are proposed which do present an alternative. I designed this piece as an emblem to the work (the struggle) being done to create a liveable city through the ventures of the co-operative housing movement. The scenes in the work are spliced together from the ruins of a demolished apartment with the scenes of a new co-op housing project.

Co-op housing in Canada supplies stabilized housing, since the complex is owned and operated by its constituents and thus is not subject to resale or flipping. Working with government lending programs (as does big business everyday) lines of credit are paid back until the co-op is owned outright by the co-op society. The on-going inflationary real estate problem, produces uncontrollable situations which disrupt the vital segments of a community.

The question remains: under what terms can housing become stable and to what extent will the state play a role? State owned housing of the 1920's across Europe, started out as a utopian critique of the 19th century myth of the 'pastoral home', and turned into nothing more than what was needed for the success of 20th century



economic centralism, whether in the form of monopoly capitalism or socialistic bureaucratic control.

The open narrative in this piece is developed on the successive portraits of a woman, who is portrayed as a co-op member, working on a new project from beginning to completion. She is photographed at the work site, looking over the building blueprints with another woman, when she spots a flooded dollhouse on the other side of the excavation. In the following panel, she squats down, cradling the isolated object. This partially sub-merged dollhouse, containing the childhood idealism of the secured family, is reflected upon as an artifact from a former age. With its miniaturized utopia of the nuclear family, private property and consumer haven, the dollhouse could be activating memories of the woman's childhood, and the expectations of dominant domestic ideals brought forth in her life.

The background to these scenes is the side of a derelict house, sided with asphalt rolls in a brick patterned design, recalling depression era housing and the collapse of that period. The final portrait of this figure is at the garden of the finished Co-op where she is looking up from reading to the camera while her two daughters play, one at tea set, and the other at spelling exercises. The image is a play on Courbet's, 'Proudhon and his children', 1856, which portrays the anarchist philosopher in a contemplative mode while his two daughters are absorbed in the same types of activities. The feminization of Courbet's representation, signifies the changing members of the activist community, and continues the portrayal of the historical counter-culture.

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## THE AWAKENING CAPTIVE

The glass arched window of The Robson Fashion Park which leads into a traditional shopping arcade is the architecture referred to in this piece. The interior shopping arcade is a pastiche reference to glory days of the 19th century city. The city of Paris at this time was conceived by artists and writers as a labyrinth, and as Walter Benjamin stated in his Arcades Project, the arcade symbolizes the "primeval landscape of consumption through which the dreaming collectivity would pass."

The transformation of Robson Street in Vancouver, from its older European 'Robsonstrasse' to the current Americanized 'Rodeo Drive', has brought a new set of retail chains to the street resulting in the emergence of a new public. If Robsonstrasse of the pre-Expo(1986) era served as a historical memory of a bohemian district (four of the European restaurants had been in operation for up to thirty-five years before being squeezed out by the fashion retailers), then the appropriation of this heritage area is on one level linked to the fashion industry's zeal for codifying the 'natural', be it, the quaint, or the shocking or the romantic appeal of the bohemian. The attributes of the 60's, Robsonstrasse bohemian—a poetic sensibility, a wanderer with subversive potential, a bearer of mixed social values, has been cleverly redirected into an 80's industry code signifying romantic individuality. The dream of romantic 'otherness', in an institutional world, is desired and packaged into a fantasy machine by the market analysts in the fashion industry.



The vignette in this work intends to construct a drama that represents both submission to, and resistance to, the fashion complex. A kinetic sequence of four images represents a figure confronted with two opposing sides of his consciousness. Within the confines of an eastern styled dressing room, a figure represents the narcissistic victim. The actor is caught in an ancient drama—his wrist and ankle are locked in shackles, ironically restraining him from actively participating in the seductive glory of the high fashion experience. This is the archetypical image of the melancholic state.

In looking at Couture's, 'Damocles', 1856, I was thinking about the psychology of addictive shopping, and was intrigued by his image of the antique figure of Damocles shackled amongst the treasures of Dionysus' palace. Damocles was in the habit of talking to soldiers about the extent of their ruler's wealth, claiming that because of the magnitude of his material wealth, no man in the kingdom could be happier. Hearing of this, Dionysius ordered Damocles to be clothed in royal garments and led to a sumptuous banquet where he was seated in the throne, shackled and left in isolation. The despair emanating from this painting illustrates the classical moral that material wealth in and of itself does not equate with higher intrinsic values of happiness.

In spite of the moralizing anecdote in Couture's picture, it does open up an interesting relation to the world of contemporary shopping and the problems inherent in consumerism. In the pantheon of consumer goods and the fetishized role that

designer labels play in the hierarchy of commodities, it is these fashion items that allow the consumer to negotiate with the fictive ideals of class and power. It is as if the possession of a designer's label (they all sound very aristocratic) will magically secure an identity or rank for the purchaser.

The shackled figure in this narrative has fallen to the fashion phantasm. But, in a healing act of consciousness, the reflective attributes of the figure has awakened to the recollection of a plentiful experience—the elusive fragrance of a red rose. This is memory in a Proustian sense involuntary, and occurring at a crisis moment, stirring him from the commodity world of the fashion system.

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## THE EXPANDING CITY

In his book 'American Pastoralism; Suburbia and The Commune Movement', Bennett Berger outlines the fall of the 19th century myth of individuality through the rise of suburbia and the organizational man. The failure to design or to promote the technological equivalent of rural self-sufficiency has fragmented a vital myth of our culture. The large suburban tracts set forth by International Modernism depend upon the automobile and the freeway; "its very success sowed the seeds of its downfall from its original pastoral ideal."

The Expanding City trio combines an engineering drawing of the Alec Fraser Bridge, a connector between the urban and older rural areas of Greater Vancouver with three pictorial rotational scenes. The bridge (the world's longest cable-stayed expanse) is set into play alongside a developer's model for a mega-suburban complex proposed for a nearby 800 acre farm. The project planned for the Spetifore Farm has since been defeated by strong local opposition.

Across the farm horizon stands a strident contractor, beside him a land surveyor and immediately behind, his assistant. The two main figures stand in the landscape with instruments of planning. The background figure is pondering a sack of abandoned potatoes he has found on the farm. The sack hanging from his grip reminds me of the ancient heroes who clutch at the hair of their decapitated foes. This type of allegorical gesture is the thematic of conquest and loss. The gesture points to the



gradual demise of the local cash crop farm in the face of an ever increasing urban population.

An elusive figure, with bow and arrow, is framed by the limbs of a monumental tree, which is in fact part of the last remaining ancient deciduous forest in the Fraser Valley. In pre-history, this landscape would have supported the subsistant economy of the tribal huntsman. The pre-agarian lifestyle of the area contains the memory traces or the 'ghosts' of the landscape. This veiled figure with the attributes of the noble woodsman—the medieval arts of archery, refers to the iconography and social history of The Middle Ages. The woodman's economy of barter and trade and stewardship of the land was all but brought to a close with the reorganization of land tenure in the form of agrarian enclosures promoted by the demand of the city for further food stuffs.

The piece attempts to bring into focus how the power of a landscape can embody the memories of historical consciousness and how those realities can be and are erased by the new forms of developer capitalism. The image of the bridge design exemplifies the push and the pull of the city to gain the resources that it demands to feed itself and its satellites.