

A stack of several sheets of aged, textured paper is shown. The top sheet is slightly offset to the right, revealing the edges of the papers underneath. The text 'THE OFFICE SHOW' is printed in a bold, black, serif font, slanted slightly to the right. A thin horizontal line is positioned below the word 'SHOW'.

**THE
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May 21 - 25, 2009

curated by Tiffany Shaw-Collinge

Shafraaz Kaba

INTRODUCTION

I spend a great deal of time in an office. Part of my job as an architect is to make offices and work environments better for clients and their employees. So it is with great interest that I view the Office Show curated by Tiffany Shaw-Collinge. I cannot imagine a subject with such rich material to draw from, and such a great reference point that many working stiffs can relate to. So universal is the office space that Scott Adams' cartoon *Dilbert* and the TV series *The Office* have capitalized on it. Perhaps these site specific installations by this diverse group of artists will provide just as poignant commentary.

The industrial revolution and rise of modernism promised many benefits that we are still waiting for in the contemporary workplace. The four-day work week is still a dream to most, albeit it is more due to the constant need for more production and more profit that prevents this outcome. Technology has increased office efficiency many times over, yet we do not think to give ourselves more time to relax.

Architecturally, office space has evolved significantly in the last century. Moving from workshops and guild houses, to the rise of skyscrapers and now to nondescript call centres, the space of the office differs significantly. Hierarchy in the workplace also dictates who gets the coveted corner office versus being relegated to the cubicle farm. Architects are continually asked how to make the work environment more appealing and comfortable and therefore more productive for companies. Access to daylight, fresh

air, quiet spaces as well as a socially rich environment are key factors. My own office is a model for interactive and collaborative space. This is achieved with the use of large windows that open up, freedom from cubicle dividers, and people grouped around project teams with many spaces available for coffee, meetings and dialogue.

Regardless of how comfortable and productive the office is, there will always be office politics, workaholics, deadbeats, unpleasant co-workers and nasty bosses that make for great office gossip and water cooler conversations. In my experience, no matter how well you can deal with space, hierarchy, health and comfort for workers, it is the people within the environment that reveal how well an office works. How a select group of artists will interpret, deconstruct, and express the office and its many issues is something that many of us will find of great interest.

Shafraaz Kaba, Architect
Manasc Isaac Architects

Tiffany Shaw-Collinge

CURATORIAL STATEMENT

My favorite part about work is the daily interactions I have with others. My elementary school report card often stated that I distracted others with my excessive talking, which, leads me to suspect that I am the annoying chatty office worker that makes too many personal phone calls.

Contemporary work is often done in compartmentalized offices. Cubicles seek to isolate individuals thus optimizing work, and minimize office chatter. Cubicles are perceived to be signs of the impersonal and convey the idea of work in its purest form. While they may be well designed, they serve as a reminder that workers are merely a small part of a whole, which can be seen as a negative in a society where individuality and status are considered the ultimate markers of success.

Although cubicles are partitioned, they are not completely separate from each other. By placing 15 artists together within cubicles, their ideas, like those of office workers, will inevitably permeate into each other. The idea of video, performance and installation may seem like an archaic way to explore the office, but I believe every office space exhibits the qualities of these mediums in some form. Consider the ubiquitous technology of computers and fax machines, the social interactions among co-workers and management, and the incongruent small personal items that

attempt to claim individuality... it is precisely these spaces that create a dialogue that invites exploration.

Much like the origins of modernism I believe that the cubicle's design is simple and economic in terms of efficiency and sparseness. The artists of The Office Show base their themes on mythical isolation and impersonal notions of the cubicle as well as on ideas surrounding efficiency, social awareness and environmental stimulation. The creation of a site-specific working environment informs not only the artists' work, but also the viewers' perception of a complete environment. By incorporating established and emerging artists, a unique community dialogue occurs for both the participating artists and the public.

Edmonton has a strong community and cultural base, that has made possible The Office Show and its' predecessor, The Apartment Show. I would like to thank all the sponsors, contributors, artists and volunteers for their help in bringing The Office Show together.

Tiffany Shaw - Collinge
Curator, The Office Show

Blair

BRENNAN



In the short story “Your God is Finished” Greg Hollingshead writes: “My grandfather’s work was done with a pick, a saw, a shovel. He cut ice and wood, and he dug graves and septic tanks.” Hollingshead writes of the same character, “It was his conviction that a man did not know a thing until he had done or experienced it for himself. To my grandfather the words working at a desk, unless they referred to a carpenter, had no meaning.”

Like Hollingshead’s short story, I hope my work invites consideration of a complex dialectic—not merely work done by hands contrasted with work done by the brain, but the related contrasting themes of urban/rural, new/old, trades/white collar and real/virtual. My work for The Office Show explores the changing nature of work and, by its location in an actual office space, the changing work place. Like much of my sculpture and installation work, this piece continues my examination of tools as magical fetish objects and ultimately celebrates our makeshift solutions to the problems of art and life.

Blair Brennan combines his writing and art practice from his home in Edmonton. His drawings, sculpture and installations have been exhibited nationally in numerous group and solo exhibitions. Brennan has contributed articles to a number of national arts and cultural publications. His favourite Ramones song is “Strength to Endure”.

Kenneth

DOREN



The audio installation is self-illuminating and the shifts are subtle. The music finds mesmeric moments of dissonance the listener/viewer is surrounded in ambiance. The installation is ongoing, no point conveying a start or stop. Its ephemeral features of light and sound envelop the viewer.

A center light gestures at a listener, quiet and still, the sounds interweave forming a whole. The elements of light and sound act like an artificially induced synesthesia: the light conveys a presence of sound, the sound the presence of a musician, both evoking the sensation of the other, a union of the senses. With the speakers on their backside representative of a human body, the effect is sound penetrating out through the belly and invokes the metaphor of a soul being either trapped or released. While the speakers breathe, the light acts as a listener and is suspended in animation.

In the office space the installation is sparse and an unembellished focus becomes internal for the viewer, enhancing the contemplative nature of the work, creating a tension between the act of work and working.

Kenneth is a Canadian multi-media artist and composer whose art installations, videos and digital operas have been presented in Canada, China, Finland, and the U.S.A. His work and practice employs musical interventions and political discourse utilizing video and performance to decode the subject. Kenneth has developed a number of personal projects that he has termed "digital operas" incorporating video and musical performance that focus on certain aspects on the old British Empire's legacy. "Rule Britannia—A Low Opera in Grand Shite Style" (2002) incorporated two pianos and two video monitors that investigated British Imperialism through the course of history. In "The Curse of Rome" (2007) video, a solo singer subverts Shakespeare's text of Julius Caesar to the restructured melodies of British baroque composer Henry Purcell.

Kenneth obtained his MFA from NSCAD University in 2005 and received an Alumni Award from Alberta College of Art and Design. His website is www.digitalopera.org

Robert **HARPIN** &

Jon **LAWSON**

The historical patriarchy of the workplace environment is a thematic element that we have chosen to amplify by creating a mid-century feel of the space, complete with taxidermy rugs, wood, plaid patterns, cowboy music and cologne that attempt to over-stimulate the senses. Postwar North America is often seen as an overtly male dominant period in western culture. Women returned home from the manufacturing positions they held while the men went back to work having fought overseas. The cubicle is meant to feel slightly misogynistic or like a 'good old boys club'. The misogyny is not an attempt to assert male dominance, rather it is meant to corrupt this hierarchy and make it redundant through its ridiculousness.

We have created an installation in an office cubicle that pays homage to man and all of his interests. The cubicle is a contradictory space with much of its contents reference man's dominance over nature, where parallels are drawn between the conquered wild and the controlled office drone. Natural order is usurped by man and man is trumped by the business machine. The attempt at individuality fails because man remains within the parameters of the office space, a mere cog in the tightly run unit of something greater.

Robert Harpin graduated with a degree in Drawing from the Alberta College of Art and Design in 2006. He uses a variety of media to explore concepts of masculinity and hyper-masculinity. Harpin frequently appropriates images from old instruction manuals and collages them onto various patterns re-contextualizing them in the process. The works explore the beauty and simplicity of the appropriated drawings, bringing to light the talent of the often anonymous artists who make the work for these manuals. Robert Harpin's work also straddles the line between art and design and using the images from old manuals shows the art in design. Harpin's completed works are often humorous and kitschy. Harpin often explores his love of masculine imagery and kitsch in installation.

Jon graduated in 2006 from the Alberta College of Art and Design with a BA in Drawing and is currently employed as a preparator for the Newzones Gallery of Contemporary Art in Calgary, Alberta. His work ranges from painting, which aesthetically reacts to the over-saturation of modernism and pop in the art market, to site-specific installation work that was featured in the Stride Gallery's +15 window space in Calgary. Lawson's installations draw from notions of the "artists practice" whether it be a comment on mundane production, the value of art as commodity, or work that aims at "the lowest common denominator".

David

FANZEN



The notion of 'the office' relates to my work by dint of it being an enclosed, private interior which allows a certain focus to be achieved. This purposeful isolation from other workers and the world at large should, ideally, encourage concentrated effort and result in clarity of reason. An artist's studio or a student's study carrel serves much the same purpose. Inner conflicts arise; however, when I make that separation and am by myself to engage in whatever 'loner activity' is expected to produce results. My mind strays and I often end up performing seemingly meaningless or frivolous tasks having little or nothing to do with I am supposed to be accomplishing.

So much living is just outside that door. I could be somewhere wonderful. I question what's really meaningful and a struggle between diligence and daydreaming ensues. I want to leave the cubicle. This universal dichotomy between theory and practice is reflected in my counterproductive version of the office.

David Janzen was born in Toronto in 1959 and moved to Alberta in 1966. He lived in Edmonton until 1979, when he relocated to Calgary to attend ACAD. There, he majored in painting, minored in drawing, graduating in 1983.

Janzen's imagery addresses settlement, industry, the fragility of civilization's dependence on technology, tenuously connected infrastructure(s) and the effects of human habitation on natural history.

After living in Calgary for 22 years, Janzen moved back to Edmonton in 2001. He occupies studios in a hangar at Edmonton City Centre Airport and works, part time, as an art facilitator at the Nina Haggerty Centre for the Arts.

Lindsay

MACDONALD



The office cubicle is a model of productivity. It's grey, it's small, and it's easy for supervisors to peer over the wall to check on progress. In this respect, uniformity is encouraged and diversity is frowned upon. Workers are expected to be at peak productivity from 9:00am to 5:00pm, Monday to Friday. Reality, however, shows us otherwise—no one has that kind of attention span. Inquiries about unfinished tasks are met with the common excuse: “That wasn't in my Outlook,” referring to the Microsoft E-mail, task management and calendar programs. The word outlook also refers to an attitude towards life. More literally, to look outwards—in this case, out of the cubicle.

“It's not in my Outlook.” is an exploration of scheduled, absurd and inappropriate office behaviour presented as a series of episodic videos in a cubicle made up to resemble an actual workspace. A physical date book functions as the schedule for the activities represented in the video. Shot in an actual cubicle, these activities of daydreams include: yoga, fishing, a romantic candle-lit dinner, a hot make-out session and trying on clothes. The viewing experience itself is a voyeuristic parallel to time-wasting practices on a work computer.

Lindsay MacDonald is an artist and new media researcher/practitioner born and raised in Calgary, Alberta. She holds a BFA in painting and digital media from the University of Calgary, and another BFA in Interdisciplinary Studio Practice from NSCAD University in Halifax, Nova Scotia. She has served as a producer, freelance editor, animator, and creative and technical consultant for several new media artists and designers. She was previously employed at The Banff Centre as the Production Coordinator (Producer) for the cross-disciplinary collaborative environment of The Banff New Media Institute (BNMI). In this capacity, she facilitated discourse and collaboration amongst artists, technicians, and researchers to create high-risk and innovative new media works through the Co-production Program. Currently, she is pursuing a Masters degree in Computational Media Design at the University of Calgary.

Royden

MILLS



I think that the choices made in offices have ruined many lives, but that in the end, our world might be much better off without people having such faith in the nature of shuffling paper to increase value, and sometimes without actually lending anything of value to the world. I hope that I can put people in a position to become aware of the situation that we are in right now. A new world order could be possible, and though it might never be so cushy as we all have enjoyed, it might be better for the entire world not to have such wealth held only by so few.

The machinery of the office might turn paper into gold, it might turn wheat into paper, and there is an awful lot of pressure on the results needed from the actions taken inside of cubicles, and offices all over the world.

Royden Mills is an Alberta born sculptor who has exhibited work internationally for 20 years. He received a Diploma in Architecture from the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology. Art and Design studio studies began at Red Deer College and culminated with a Masters Degree from the University of Alberta. Mills worked closely with Anthony Caro as assistant in 1989. Mills subsequently traveled to international workshops in Poland, and the USA, and maintained a studio in Hokkaido Japan for two years. He has been coordinator of 32 sections of Art and Design Fundamentals at the University of Alberta. Mills' sculpture has been exhibited and included in collections internationally, including at Arlington Heights Sculpture Park Chicago, Convergence Festival Providence Rhode Island, Centennial Plaza, Red Deer, Canada, Franconia Sculpture Park USA, Windsor Sculpture Park, State University of New York, Chomin Hall Hokkaido Japan, Collection of Alberta Foundation for the Arts: MacEwan College, and the University of Lethbridge.

Gerry

MORITA



The office environment interests me in how it physically attempts to direct and limit the individual in every possible way. This makes it a perfect environment from which to address broader social issues. As an artist working with bodies in varied states of movement, I like to treat each dance space as an independent site and my unconventional use of this space enables me to take my work in new directions.

Gerry Morita graduated from Simon Fraser University's dance program in 1994 and has since worked in Vancouver, Montreal, Tokyo and Edmonton as a dancer, choreographer, performance artist and teacher. Her body of work involves continuous inquiry into new ways of seeing movement, the body, and the spaces between us. She studies contact improvisation, Noguchi Tai-so and other somatic-based techniques in order to find non-performative, natural ways of being in the body. She has been artistic director of Mile Zero Dance for the past four years.

aAron

MUNSON



The office show will be a chance to explore the world within the cubical. Identical spaces are transformed into windows of worlds that extend beyond the walled confine. I have created a glimpse into the world of an individual whose sterile and obsessively organized work space is contrasted by the internal chaos within their own life. This will be viewed through a series of monitors that acts as a windows into the mind and life of the office worker.

aAron munson is a filmmaker from Edmonton, Alberta. He has been active for about five years and has created over 20 short films to date. Experimental in nature, aAron's work explores his own interpretation of the world around and within himself using a variety of different filmmaking techniques, such as pixilation, time-lapse, and stop-motion. Working with Super 8, 16mm, and 35mm, his work explores the fine qualities of working with film, while incorporating the use of other visual mediums. With an emphasis placed on texture and tone, aAron relies on imagery and sound to communicate the meaning behind his films. His works have been screened at numerous film festivals and multi-disciplinary events. Aside from this aAron also collaborates with numerous audio artists both locally and internationally. Through the process of capture and creation, aAron munson has established himself as a visual artist who's original and experimental work reveals the many layers of a world yet unseen.

Christopher

PAYNE



The Societies Act explores the concept of information in the office environment and the relationship between this information and the systems set up to manage and control it. The work focuses on the structure of regulatory systems, or “cybernetics,” that exist in the contemporary office setting. These can include everything from text and documents to surveillance.

Further, these systems of control are expressed in the installation/ office space through one of the most prevalent and banal of office fixtures – the computer monitor. As such, the monitor plays a central role in my investigation of these relationships.

Christopher Payne obtained a BFA Specialization in Film Production from Concordia University’s Mel Hoppenheim School of Cinema in 2007 and a certificate in Arts and Cultural Management from Grant MacEwan in 2008. As a media artist Payne’s works include film, video, custom programmed video installation, digital and analog photography and brief forays into robotics. The majority of his film based work focuses on cameraless animation where images are created by directly manipulating the surface of the film.

Payne currently lives and works in Edmonton, Alberta and since September 2008 he has been employed as Production Coordinator at FAVA (the Film and Video Arts Society of Alberta).

Jan

PEACOCK



I have worked with video, tracking its advances, for 30 years. It is impossible to have done this without having mainstream militaristic and pop culture uses of the medium loom large in my field of vision.

These days, I am fascinated by the overwhelming primacy of the technology-driven search for physical evidence in contemporary television dramas, where the search is the dramatic plot and its visualizing technologies are, in a sense, its infallible characters. This movement towards an impossible clarity avoids any critique of the rapid obsolescence of technologies that purport not only to show us things, but also to show us what things “mean.” Science equals both moral certainty and mystical authority, hence the “rightness” of the search for weapons of mass destruction.

By the same token, highly technologized forensic audits can make visible the shenanigans of bank executives, yet real accountability seems less likely when measured in the billions than it is in every nickel in an artist-run centre’s budget.

Account 2.1 uses a technologized forensic search to explore ideas of accountability, confidentiality, surveillance and labour.

Jan Peacock works in video and installation, and has exhibited widely throughout Canada, as well as in France, Netherlands, Germany, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Poland, Denmark, the United Kingdom, and the U.S.

Her work is found in international public and private collections, including the National Gallery of Canada, the Museum of Modern Art in New York and the Ludwig Museum in Cologne. She has received several Canada Council grants, and awards at the Atlantic Film & Video Festival, the Chicago International Film & Video Festival, and the Atlanta Film & Video Festival. She is a recipient of the Bell Canada Award and the Canada Council Medal for her contribution to the field of video. She lives in Halifax, where she teaches at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design.

Amie

RANGEL



The system of surveillance involves very little expense; there is no need for arms, physical violence, material constraints, just the gaze.¹

The notion of surveillance and organization within the framework of an office building and other urban institutional spaces serve not only a function, but speak of deeper social constructs. I am interested in the contemporary human condition and my work explores the delicate balance of restriction and protection, confinement and efficiency, authority and submission. The purpose of this work is not to find a definitive meaning, singular answer or solution to the complex structure of institutional frameworks, but to raise awareness of spatial constructs within modern human society.

1. Foucault, Michel, "The Eye of Power." *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*. Ed. Colin Gordon. trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, Kate Soper. (New York: Panteon, 1980). 155

Amie Rangel attended College of the Sequoias in Visalia, California, where she was exposed to drawing, painting, design, and printmaking. Graduating with her Associate of Arts degree in 2002, she continued her education in art at California State University Long Beach, receiving a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Drawing/Painting and Printmaking in 2005. This was followed by the opportunity for Rangel to further her knowledge in lithography as a graduate non-degree student at the Herron School of Art and Design in Indianapolis, Indiana. During this time, she was accepted to the Drawing and Intermedia program at the University of Alberta. As of November 2008, Rangel completed her Master of Fine Arts degree. She intends to continue her artistic practice in drawing and installation based work, as well as teaching drawing at university level.

Tim **RECHNER** &

Craig **TALBOT**



We have created an energetically rich, visually stimulating web like installation made up of collaborative drawings of all shapes and sizes with an emphasis on stream of consciousness collage and automatic, collaborative drawing. For this project, we passed back and fourth small drawings created on a variety of surfaces that make up the bulk of this installation piece. Colored yarn and

string are to construct the skeletal structure of the installation, while the small drawings and objects hang from this massive form and scattered on the floor underneath it. The installation of the string and yarn become an act of automatic drawing within itself. The office environment is referenced through the incorporation of certain office supplies within the web like installation.

After living in Vancouver, Montreal and Halifax, Tim Rechner has been living and working as a full time artist in Edmonton since 2001. He has studied art at Nova Scotia College of Art and Design as well as Red Deer College. Working in the mediums of painting, drawing, installation and film, Rechner utilizes subconscious brain activity when creating art with an emphasis on energy, physicality and gesture. Inspired by the uninhibited process with which young children create art, he aspires to create similar pure aesthetic expressions with brushes and other mark making tools. His work is primarily about energy both frenetic and calming and the juxtaposition between these two states.

Craig Talbot was born in Calgary, Alberta and went to Red Deer college in the Art and Design Program for three years. His education was cut short by drug addiction, and mental illness. At that time, Craig was stripped of the ability to make art by the power of his addiction, and what was later diagnosed as schizo-affective disorder, a rare mental illness related to schizophrenia. After a long struggle to get clean and sober, and to seek treatment for his illness, Craig underwent many journeys towards regaining his artwork, and more importantly, himself.

It has been over a decade since then, and Craig has never forgotten where he came from. He has dedicated his life's work to explain to his audience the nature of drug addiction, mental illness, and the elements of construction, de-construction, and re-construction that are evident in his current practice. The work is a metaphor for that process of rebuilding oneself, and redesigning everything in his life.

Roberta Paulson, The Lab, 2009

Patrick J.

REED



The office is a paradigm for both order and fragility in Western culture. It possesses sacredness in its safety and balance. It is a world in which survival is hinged upon regularity in schedule, environment, and success. If something goes awry, terribly awry, the potential for chaos is ripe as a soft orange, and the potential for collapse that of a broken leg. I am interested in this collapse, the violation of this ordered domain and the defilement of its sanctity.

Patrick J. Reed attended the University of Iowa where he received a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in photography, a Bachelor of Arts degree in art history, and a certification in museum studies. His hometown of Iowa City, Iowa, in which he resided for most of his life, is a location prone to natural disaster, sudden tragedy, and a constant westerly wind. Growing up in this environment has engrained within him a certain sense of anxiety and fatalism, which inform his creative output. He is currently working on his Master of Fine Arts thesis in printmaking at the University of Alberta.

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MADE



