



OLGA CHAGAOUTDINOVA | BED, CROSSES AND A FAN | C-PRINT | 61 x 61 CENTIMETERS | 2007

OLGA CHAGAOUTDINOVA

PATRICK MIKHAIL GALLERY



OLGA CHAGAOUTDINOVA | STOM-ACHE | INSTALLATION VIEW | PATRICK MIKHAIL GALLERY | 2010

PATRICK MIKHAIL GALLERY

EDUCATION

- 2008 Master of Fine Arts, Photography, Concordia University, Montreal, Quebec
- 2005 Bachelor of Fine Arts, Photography, Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design (ECIAD), Vancouver, British Columbia
- 1998 Graduate Study, Historical Culturology specialty, Republican Institute for Humanities, St. Petersburg, Russia
- 1995 Certificate of Culturology, Republican Institute for Humanities under the State University, St. Petersburg, Russia
- 1993 Certificate of History of Religion, Pedagogical Institute, Khabarovsk, Russia
- 1993 Bachelor of Arts, Russian Language and World Literature, Pedagogical University, Khabarovsk, Russia

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2013 The Zone, X-Border Biennial, Rovaniemi, Finlande
- 2013 Un-ravelling, Galerie Trois Points, Montreal, Quebec
- 2012 Madre Russia. Asolo Art Film Festival, Asolo, Italy.
- 2011 In the Time of Sakura. Trois Points Gallery, Montreal, Quebec
- 2010 Parallel Stories, The Pabellón Cuba, Havana, Cuba
- 2010 STOM-ACHE, Patrick Mikhail Gallery, Ottawa, Ontario
- 2010 STOME-ACHE, Center Regart, Levis, Quebec, Canada
- 2010 Y Vieron la Luz, Oficina del Historiador de la Ciudad de Camagüey, Camagüey, Cuba
- 2010 Parallel Stories, Two artists show, The Pabellón Cuba, Havana, Cuba
- 2009 STOM-ACHE, Gallery Trois Points, Montreal, Quebec
- 2008 Islands, Far East Museum of Fine Art, Khabarovsk, Russia
- 2008 Cuban Pictures Series, Gallery Trois Points, Montreal, Quebec
- 2006 The Zone, Far East Museum of Fine Art, Khabarovsk, Russia

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2013 Habiter sa couleur, Aires Libres, Village, Montreal, Quebec
- 2013 Mother Russia, The Salt Yard Gallery, Center for Contemporary Photography, Hong Kong, China
- 2013 Splendid Isolation, Esker Foundation, Calgary, Alberta
- 2012 "2+2" Centro de Desarrollo de Las Artes Visuales (CDAV), Havana, Cuba
- 2012 Houston Biennial FotoFest 2012, Houston, USA
- 2012 Papier 12 Contemporary Art Fair, Montreal, Quebec
- 2012 PMG Editions Project, Patrick Mikhail Gallery, Ottawa, Ontario
- 2010 The Triumph of the Therapeutic, Patrick Mikhail Gallery, Ottawa, Ontario
- 2010 International Festival of Photography Photovisa, Krasnodar, Russia
- 2010 Pingyao International Photography Festival, Pingyao, China
- 2010 Living Things, Dazibao, Montreal, Quebec

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- 2010 Parallel Stories, The Pabellón Cuba, Havana, Cuba
- 2009 Microcosm, Patrick Mikhail Gallery, Ottawa, Ontario
- 2009 Preoccupations: Photographic Explorations of the Grey Nuns Mother House, FOFA Gallery, Montreal, Quebec
- 2009 Objets de L'exil, Gallery Nikki Diana Marquardt, Paris, France
- 2008 McCord Project, McCord Museum, Montreal, Quebec
- 2007 Habitat, Centro Hispano-Americano de la Havana, Havana, Cuba
- 2006 Ignition, Leonard & Bina Ellen Gallery, Montreal, Quebec
- 2006 Gallery Trois Points, Montreal, Quebec
- 2006 LUSID, Concordia University, Montreal, Quebec
- 2006 Budget, M.F.A. Group Show, Concordia University, Montreal, Quebec
- 2005 Picture this, a parallel group show, Vancouver, British Columbia
- 2004 Fantasy Group Show, Concourse Gallery, ECIAD, Vancouver, British Columbia

AWARDS AND GRANTS

- 2012 Eleonora Duse Award. Asolo International ArtFilm Festival, Asolo, Italy
- 2012 AFA Production Grant, Alberta, Canada
- 2012 Connecting Calgary Grant, Calgary, Alberta
- 2012 FPAC ACAD, Calgary, Alberta
- 2011 Nomination for Kandinsky Award, Moscow, Russia
- 2011 Travel Grant, Quebec Council for the Arts
- 2011 Travel Grant, Canadian Council for the Arts
- 2010 Research/Creation Grant, Canada Council for the Arts
- 2010 Travel Grant, Quebec Council for the Arts
- 2009 Travel Grant, Quebec Council for the Arts
- 2008 Travel Grant, Canadian Council for the Arts
- 2008 Travel Grant for Academic Conference, Concordia University, Montreal, Quebec
- 2008 Travel Allocation Grant, CIAM, Montreal, Quebec
- 2007 Joyce Melville Memorial Scholarship, Montreal, Quebec
- 2007 British Columbia Arts Council Senior Award
- 2007 Project Allocation Grant, CIAM, Montreal, Quebec
- 2007 Travel Allocation Grant, CIAM, Montreal, Quebec
- 2006 Roloff Beny Travel Fellowship in Photography, Concordia University Montreal, Quebec
- 2006 Power Corporation of Canada Graduate Fellowship, Concordia University, Montreal, Quebec
- 2006 Graduate Fellowship, Concordia University, Montreal, Quebec
- 2005 DeSeve Entrance Fellowship in Photography, Concordia University, Montreal, Quebec
- 1998 Award for research on traditional ornaments of native people in Far-East Russia, Institute of Sustainable Community, Washington, DC

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SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY, PUBLICATIONS, REVIEWS AND INTERVIEWS

- 2011 Kandinsky Award. Catalogue, Moscow, Russia
2010 Cary Michael Dauil, CV magazine, February issue, Montreal, Quebec
2009 Emergence, book on contemporary photography, ed. Sarah Parsons, Gallery 44 & Ryerson University, Toronto, Ontario
2009 Preoccupations: Photographic Explorations of the Grey Nuns Mother House, exhibition catalogue, editor Martha Langford, Concordia University, Montreal, Quebec
2009 Annie Lafleur, "From Russia with Love. Olga Chagaoutdinova. La mémoire du présent retrouvé." OVNI, vol. 2, Montreal, Quebec, p. 32
2008 Leah Sandals, "Class of 2008," Canadian Art, Winter, vol. 25, no. 4, Toronto, Ontario, p. 62
2007 Habitat, exhibition catalogue, Havana, Cuba
2006 Sophie Hackett, "Russian Pictures," Magenta Magazine, Winter, vol. 1, no. 3, Toronto, Ontario, p. 30
2005 Anthology of Contemporary Canadian Photography, first edition, Carte Blanche Magenta Foundation, Toronto, Ontario
2005 Russian Pictures, PhotoEd, Winter issue, Magenta Foundation, Canada

SELECTED LECTURES

- 2011 Artist Presentation/Lecture. State Center of Contemporary Art, Yekaterinburg, Russia
2010 Artist talk, Exhibition Y Vieron la Luz. Camagüey, Havana, Cuba
2010 Artist talk, STOME-ACHE. Patrick Michael Gallery, Ottawa, Canada
2008 Artist talk at the Far East Museum of Fine Art, Khabarovsk, Russia
2008 Workshop, "Cyanotype Photography," Center of Che Guevara, Havana, Cuba
2007 Hispano-Americano Cultural Centre, Havana, Cuba
2006 Ludwig Foundation, Havana, Cuba

SELECTED FESTIVALS AND CONFERENCES

- 2011 Esse Magazine, Art-Auction. Museum of Fine Arts, Montreal, Canada
2011 International Video-Film Festival, VideoArte, Camagüey, Cuba
2011 "Meeting Place," International Portfolio Preview, Moscow, Russia
2010 "Meeting Place," International Portfolio Preview, Houston, Texas
2009 Santa Fe Selected Artist Portfolio Preview, Santa Fe, New Mexico
2008 "Aquarelle" video, Official Selection, Experimental Video Art Category, VI Festival Internacional del Cine Pobre, Holguin, Cuba

CURATORIAL PROJECTS

PATRICK MIKHAIL GALLERY

2012 "Borderless" International Exhibition. Havana Biennale. Collateral Event.
Curator. Havana, Cuba

COLLECTIONS

Collection of National Bank of Canada
Collection Prêt d'oeuvres d'art, Musée National des Beaux-Arts du Québec
Musée National des Beaux-Arts du Québec, Quebec City
Centro Hispano-Americano de la Havana, Havana, Cuba
Far East Museum of Fine Art, Khabarovsk, Russia
Hydro Quebec Permanent Corporate Collection, Montreal, Quebec
Andy Pilara Collection, San-Francisco, California

Trish Boon

In Conversation with Canadian Contemporary Art



Dynamic Landscape

Posted on [April 28, 2011](#)

“...it’s hard times for polar bears...”

-Scarlett Hooft Graafland

Marshall McLuhan’s interpretation of the Gestalt concept of figure and ground is shown through four vividly distinct and culturally diverse examples in the CONTACT Primary Exhibition: *Dynamic Landscape*, which opens tomorrow, April 29, in the main space of the gallery. As I mentioned in my last article, the theme for this year’s CONTACT festival was inspired by comparing the insidious visions of environmental devastation in Burtynsky’s *Oil*, to McLuhan’s vision of the “figure” as the car, and the “ground” as the abundant yet often forgotten accessories to car culture.

While the “grounds” in the pieces in *Dynamic Landscape* all differ geographical and contextually, they are all intrinsically defined by their human inhabitants- visible or not. Curated by CONTACT Artistic Director Bonnie Rubenstein, the show is comprised of four international artists: Olga Chagaoutdinova, Scarlette Hooft Graafland, Viviane Sassen, and Dayanita Singh.



Olga Chagaoutdinova, *Living Corner*, Cuban Pictures, 2009, Courtesy of the Artist, Galerie Trois Points, Montreal, and Patrick Mikhail Gallery, Ottawa

Olga Chagaoutdinova gives us richly coloured, over-inhabited interiors in the contrasting climates of Cuba and Russia. The moods of the Cuban interiors are familiar to anyone accustomed Polidori's *Havana* series. Peeling paint, repurposed materials and missing tiles are repeating motifs in these sometimes near-decrepit living spaces. Even tiny spaces are filled with plants that call to the heat of open-doors. The warm blues and greens from the Cuban interiors are repeated in the decorative motifs of natural landscapes within the Russian spaces. In *Chair at the Beach in the*

Bedroom, a traditionally upholstered chair sits in front of a photographic wall mural of a tropical beach scene.



Olga Chagaoutdinova, *Chair at the beach in the bedroom*, Russian Picture, 2006,
Courtesy of the Artist, Galerie Trois Points, Montreal, and Patrick Mikhail Gallery,
Ottawa

Viviane Sassen takes us across the globe into an unfamiliar vision of Africa. Parceled glimpses of deep earthy browns are contrasted by ultra-synthetic technicolours and starched whites. Gestural dramatizations evoking pieta

flood the figures in her photos with emotion, which would have otherwise been starved due to their hidden faces.



Viviane Sassen, *Belladonna*, 2010, Courtesy of Motive Gallery, Amsterdam and Stevenson, Cape Town/Johannesburg

Dayanita Singh's series *Dream Villa*, takes us to a village in India. While the skies are dark, aggressive pools of artificial light pierce the warmth of the night-time imagery with cold reflecting hues. The stark lights seem an alien presence that conjure feelings of disquietude.



Dayanita Singh, Dream Villa 25, 2007, 2008, Courtesy of the artist and Frith Street Gallery, London

Dutch artist Scarlett Hooft Graafland portrays images of our own true North. An avid traveler, Hooft Graafland was attracted to the idea of visiting the Canadian north from slides shown in class by a high-school teacher who had spent time working there. On her own journey, she spent four months in Igloolik, Nunavut living with local families to immerse her understanding beyond that of the outsider who understands that the people and their lands are in danger. The themes of environmental degradation and cultural extinction appear in stunning portrayals of the northern

landscape. At times, Hooft Graafland steers away from the over-politicization of her work by adding absurdist elements of humour.

Sitting amidst the stark blue and white landscape, the artist is draped with the hide of a polar bear. Reminiscent of Marcus Coates shamanic escapades dressed in deer-hide, the message behind the image is impossible to ignore, but the humour adds a palatable lightness.



Scarlett Hooft Graafland, *Lemonade Igloo*, 2007, Courtesy of Michael Hoppen Gallery, London

In *Lemonade Igloo*, a lone figure leans against a rusty toned Igloo. The artist explains that she wanted to construct an Igloo out of a commercially popular drink to underline the generation divide and the gradual loss of cultural traditions. The deep reddish hue of the Igloo seemed appropriately reminiscent of blood, especially as it is hung on the same wall as a gruesome portrait of a palm tree composed of entrails.

Dynamic Landscape is one of the six Primary Exhibitions for this year's CONTACT festival. It's always a good party at MOCCA, so don't miss the opening tomorrow between 7-10. The show runs until June 5 alongside Fred Herzog's photos of Vancouver in the 1950's-1960's, organized by the National Gallery of Canada and the Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art.



Scarlett Hooft Graafland will be speaking about her work this Sunday, May 1, between 12-1 at MOCCA, followed by insights into her photographic and video works offered by Olga Chagaoutdinova between 1-2 pm.

CANADIANART



Olga Chagaoutdinova *storm-ache* 2009 Video still

Olga Chagaoutdinova: From Russia With Pain

By [Canadian Art](#)

POSTED: SEPTEMBER 17, 2009

Russian-born photographer [Olga Chagaoutdinova](#) has won notice for her atmospheric images of Russian and Cuban interiors that speak to the broader social contexts in which they are situated. But for her new exhibition at [Galerie Trois Points](#), now operating in a renovated exhibition space under the direction of new owners Jean-Michel Bourgeois and Émilie Grandmont Bérubé, Chagaoutdinova provides an added dimension of intimacy with a series of self-portrait photo and video works framed, in the Russian tradition, by themes of tragedy, suffering and fatality as well as feminism. [Pinpointed last year as one of the top art school graduates in the country](#), Chagaoutdinova is no novice; she has presented solo exhibitions at the Far East Museum of Fine Arts in Khabarovsk, Russia, and in Amsterdam. This fall she also shows in Paris at [Nikki Diana Marquardt Gallery](#). (372 rue Ste-Catherine O #520, Montreal QC) www.galerietroispoints.qc.ca

CANADIANART

SPOTLIGHT

THIS SERIES OF ESSAYS ON EMERGING CANADIAN ARTISTS IS SPONSORED BY THE FRASER ELLIOTT FOUNDATION IN MEMORY OF BETTY ANN ELLIOTT

Fifty thousand dollars: it's the approximate price of a large Jack Shadbolt painting, a 2008 Lexus GS or a down payment on a 600-square-foot condo in downtown Toronto. It's also roughly the price—with living expenses, books and materials factored in—of a graduate art education in Canada. And it's a useful fulcrum for the question of whether the expense of a graduate art education—one covered by schools, grant makers and the public, if not by an art student—is worthwhile.

To shed light on this issue, *Canadian Art* selected ten of this year's top M.F.A. and M.A.A. (Master's of Applied Arts) grads from across the country, looked at their work and listened to their own evaluations of graduate study. The picture they painted wasn't always rosy. Debt from undergrad years is a burden for many and almost all these grads agreed that stronger links be established to ground students in the real-world practice of art. But overall, these grads seemed to feel that the price tag on their M.F.A.s was worth it. For most, their studies helped ease them into a new community; for all, the degree represented a rare opportunity to focus on art-making for two solid years.

The range and caliber of what these recent grads have created—in realms as diverse as abstract painting, video performance and institutional critique—reinforce this optimism. As their various awards and

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magazine, all prices, unless
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Class of 2008

At the threshold of the art world

By [Leah Sandals](#)

POSTED: DECEMBER 1, 2008

Fifty thousand dollars: it's the approximate price of a large [Jack Shadbolt](#) painting, a 2008 Lexus GS or a down payment on a 600-square-foot condo in downtown Toronto. It's also roughly the price—with living expenses, books and materials factored in—of a graduate art education in Canada. And it's a useful fulcrum for the question of whether the expense of a graduate art education—one covered by schools, grant makers and the public, if not by an art student—is worthwhile.

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The range and calibre of what these recent grads have created—in realms as diverse as abstract painting, video performance and institutional critique—reinforce this optimism. As their various awards and grants attest, each of these artists has as a goal not only mastery of practice, but its reinvention and reinvigoration.

Other trends exist among these diverse art-makers too. Two of them—the *trompe l'oeil* painter [Dil Hildebrand](#) and the anti-Modern abstractionist Nguyen Duc Huy Nam—might be called the new illusionists. They have a traditional studio-based painting practice, but create work that deconstructs the logic of seeing a flat plane. Another type of emerging artist might be called the entangled rebel. Exemplified by the cheeky interventionist Joshua Schwebel and the erudite conceptualist [Kristina Lee Podesva](#), these artists make immaterial works—think educational platforms and content-free galleries—grounded in a deep connection to academia and theory. Another group of artists could be termed the innovators. These are artists like the language-obsessed microscope photographer Victoria Cheung and the relational-aesthetic painter Vytas Narusevicius, who both combine art with other fields. The seers of the 2008 class—like the photographer [Olga Chagaoutdinova](#) and the video artist Olivia Boudreau—use lens-based practices to view and question the world in all its cultural, social and mediated diversity. Finally, the builders—represented by Kiki Athanassiadis and [John Eisler](#)—speak to the hierarchies of the built environment through specific approaches to both product and process.

Dil Hildebrand surprised many people—not least himself—when, in 2006, halfway through his Concordia University M.F.A., he won the RBC Canadian Painting Competition.

“I came into the program thinking, ‘I’ll try different things and not be too concerned with making polished work to show the world,’” he recalls. “I was thinking grad school would be a private place to do my research, but I was thrown onto the national stage.” Looking at Hildebrand’s work (which is represented by the Montreal dealer Pierre-François Ouellette) today, it’s clear that the pressures of exposure have served his paintings well. When he started school, Hildebrand’s paintings intriguingly married his experience in the artifice-laden world of set design with painterly skill to create witty worlds within worlds. Now he’s expanded his *trompe l'oeil* references, playing with how paintings themselves are created to achieve layered, sophisticated and thought-provoking illusions. Hildebrand—who began his B.F.A. at the University of Manitoba and then spent five years in Vancouver working on films—says the program helped him achieve his M.F.A. goal of settling into Montreal.

“I needed a community,” he says. “And I needed the way an M.F.A. program can connect you with a community.” The program even connected him with the former Winnipeg painter Eleanor Bond, who became a positive influence.

In 2005, the Calgary artist [John Eisler](#) was known nationally for paintings that meticulously reproduced the way industrial printers render images. With his record of successful shows and positive reviews, some wondered why Eisler decided to break stride and do an M.F.A. at the University of Guelph.

As he explains, he was, in many ways, feeling worn out and hemmed in by the niche he had created. “Those older paintings were very optically rich, but very labour-intensive,” he says. “I found myself a little bit alienated from the process; the procedure eventually required that I act as a kind of machine.”

Eisler needed time during which he didn’t have to worry about showing and could try something new. “Grad school seemed perfect for that,” he says. “It would give me the chance to develop a new body of work without a day job. Also, I wanted to teach, and connect with a new community [in Toronto].” With this in mind, he spent his M.F.A. developing a practice rooted in a *lack* of visual control. Instead of painting a canvas with brushes, Eisler now stains it, folds it, immerses it and works in other procedural ways to generate an abstract image. He has also branched into sculptural “wireframe drawings.” In both genres, he aims to make creation itself his subject.

Eisler calls his M.F.A. experience satisfying. His plans include a Toronto studio and shows like the one he had last fall at Diaz Contemporary. Of his current paintings, he says, “I don’t worry about a lot of things that I used to worry about. I’m responsible for everything, but I don’t have to think about every square centimetre like I did before.”

Many Canadian grad students would kill to study in the United States. With privately endowed facilities, big-market access and international curatorial connections all part of the American promise, the spirit is willing, if the bank account is weak. The recent University of British Columbia grad **Kristina Lee Podesva** turned that tendency on its ear, moving from New York, where she took classes at Harvestworks and worked for the web service e-flux, to Vancouver for grad school. As Podesva tells it, her choice was due partly to the presidency of George Bush, partly to Seattle connections and partly to UBC’s conceptualist legacy.

Interestingly, even at a school as conscientious as UBC, Podesva quickly became frustrated with gaps in pedagogy. So she made filling these gaps the purpose of her practice; alternative schools, inspired by historical projects like Black Mountain College, Vincent Trasov and Michael Morris’s Colour Research project and Joseph Beuys’s Free International University.

Podesva’s 18-month *colourschool* project, for instance, was “a venue for free study, a free school within a school for research and a collaborative study of colour as it is culturally coded”—both formally and socially. The first iteration of *colourschool* was in Podesva’s M.F.A. studio at UBC; the second was at Emily Carr the following year. The project included weekly labs on colour, bootleg video-art screenings, Fluxus-style events like air tastings and slide shows on the use of

colour in public space. ([Instant Coffee](#), [Paul de Guzman](#) and [Germaine Koh](#) were among the presenters.)

Colourschool and other Podesva projects—like *The Arcades Audio Project*, in which an elaborate meal would be followed by diners reading Walter Benjamin, or *The 09F9 Archive*, an exhibition about DVD pirating—reflect her concern with commercialization.

“Even a cursory understanding of art from the past 40 years shows how much artists try to resist commodification of their work,” she says. “I think there’s some critical function that art can serve; I was longing for this. So I reconfigured a space within the institution to do collaborative, open work.”

The majority of M.F.A. grads experience some culture shock when they move from school to non-academic life. But the Concordia photo M.F.A. **Olga Chagaoutdinova** has lived through far more dramatic transitions—she grew up in Soviet Russia, had her first child when the Berlin Wall came down and moved to Canada in 2000.

Chagaoutdinova says her photography practice was taken up first as a means of understanding North American culture, and then, later, as a method for studying her own roots. “I knew that if you want to study a culture deeply, you have to look at how people live,” she says. “I decided to study hard.”

The results—nurtured first at Emily Carr under the wing of [Roy Arden](#) and later in Montreal under Geneviève Cadieux—are both extensive and impressive. Her bodies of work range from portraits of Russian prisoners to contemporary Russian home interiors to urban interiors and landscapes from Cuba.

“Russian society discarded many good values with the shift to perestroika,” Chagaoutdinova explains of her Russian interiors. “Now, cupboards they’ve had for 200 years sit next to IKEA furniture that will fall apart in 40. I’m interested in how all these cultures coexist in one corner of a room.” Her conviction that socialism will disappear in her lifetime accounts for her interest in documenting Cuba.

[Martha Langford](#), the founding director of the Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography and an art-history professor at Concordia, is currently working with Chagaoutdinova on a commission for the Montreal area, and last fall the artist showed in her native eastern Russia. This year, the Havana Biennial is also on the slate.

Nguyen Duc Huy Nam has come a long way as a painter, both geographically and artistically. First trained in Edmonton at Grant MacEwan College with subsequent undergrad studies at Emily Carr in Vancouver, the recent NSCAD University M.F.A. grad has moved from realism to a unique form of abstraction that, among other accolades, recently won him the \$25,000 Joseph Plaskett Award.

Nam considers his M.F.A. program key to breakthroughs in his work. “When I applied to grad programs, I knew my work would change significantly,” he explains from his new home in

Montreal. “But I felt like the M.F.A. environment would facilitate a change that could be quite difficult.”

Nam’s latest paintings, the result of this shift, meet his self-set challenge of exploring abstraction “without rehashing or repeating certain tropes of modernist art,” Albertan or otherwise. In his work, he uses shapes he encounters in the urban landscape—from bank-machine consoles to bus interiors—as starting points for a process of formal manipulation that leads to canvases of colourful, symmetrical elements.

Nam plans on taking the next ten years to develop his current body of work. “A teacher once told me that I should take it easy, because I’m very impatient,” Nam explains. “She said most painters don’t figure themselves out until their mid-30s: she told me that when I was 23, when I wanted it all and wanted it now. So now I’m just working in the studio as hard as I can; I hope to go to Europe through the Plaskett award; and I hope to pick up a commercial gallery.”

A master’s program usually runs two to three years—though it can feel more like one quick month or a dragging decade depending on one’s enjoyment. The recent UQAM grad **Olivia Boudreau** is particularly sensitive to such differing experiences of time; during her grad studies, the former dance-school dropout built a performance and video practice that examines the psychological and physical dimensions of duration.

In one recent Montreal performance, Boudreau, who won UQAM’s Prix Pierre-Ayot as well as a SSHRC grant, sat in Concordia’s Leonard and Bina Ellen Art Gallery, her back to a camera, for the 150 hours of the exhibition’s duration. During this time, she gazed ahead at live video of her back, providing a literal and symbolic meditation on the fissures between embodied and documented realities.

In other works, Boudreau addresses visceral aspects of the body. “I’m also interested in intimacy, animality, seduction,” she explains, “all these themes referenced in images of the body that we see in pop culture.” Her works reflect a pointed, savvy, third-wave-feminist perspective, with videos of young women in fur coats crouching on all fours, or women in off-camera states of undress. The work can also take a humorous turn, as in *Vaches*, a video that documents the artist tethered to a cow grazing in a field.

Though Boudreau’s first pick for grad school was Glasgow, returning to her undergrad haunt of UQAM worked well. She notes the support of André Clément and David Tomas, as well as an exchange stint at the École nationale supérieure des arts décoratifs in Paris, as key to her development. At the moment, Boudreau is preparing for a show at UQAM in January.

The priority for most freshly minted M.F.A.s is shopping their thesis work to new exhibition venues—not for **Joshua Schwebel**, however. The 2008 NSCAD M.F.A. grad’s thesis show consisted of exactly *zero* works. Prior to the show, Schwebel had for months been showing up at scheduled seminars gabbing about his “massive thesis project” and sporting “injuries” from working on it. One of NSCAD’s largest galleries was specially reserved for his thesis work. On opening day, it was completely empty—excepting some outraged peers. An image of Schwebel “working in the studio” that ended up in a NSCAD brochure was staged.

Though Schwebel's practice made him unpopular with some, in the end it seemed a perfect fit for NSCAD University. Remembering his successful thesis defense, he says, "Sara Hartland-Rowe [a NSCAD faculty member] came up and said, 'Oh, we should have failed you. The project would have been so much better!' And I was like, 'I know!'"

For Schwebel, expectation was his subject. "What I ended up doing was creating the expectation of work, of content. I created evidence that it would be fulfilled—without fulfilling it."

The work—which includes the exhibiting of his university transcripts as "documentation of performance"—might seem overly cheeky, but Schwebel has good backup. He spent much of his time in Halifax studying contemporary philosophy and rhetoric—what some might call deep non-object theory—at King's College, earning a SSHRC grant along the way. Further, one is reminded of a certain [Ken Lum](#) student performance: stealthily procuring all the keys for a studio and then locking everyone out, as well as showing up drunk and abusive.

Though Schwebel's work is less confrontational, it is just as pointed in its analysis of (and just as enmeshed within) the world of academic roles. Schwebel is currently following up his M.F.A. degree with Ph.D. studies at the University of Western Ontario. He says he hopes to study public art, and the unanticipated. In a deliciously ironic turn for a man who aims to make "art that doesn't look like art," he is teaching foundational studio classes.

From the excellent recent exhibitions at the Canadian Centre for Architecture to the rush on architects for art-museum redevelopments, it is clear that art and architecture have a particularly friendly relationship at the moment. This zeitgeist is deeply felt in the recent installations, sculptures and drawings of the York University grad **Kiki Athanassiadis**. Raised in Montreal, with an initial degree in architecture from McGill, Athanassiadis finds that art is the ideal form for exploring her general interest in the built environment and particular interest in home architectures. As she put it over the phone last summer, "My work became about bringing the idea and feeling of home or place from my personal history into more general ideas of home. Looking at the writings of architectural theorists, and the history of architecture, was also an influence."

Athanassiadis, like many M.F.A. students, approached grad school as a focused opportunity to make a cohesive body of work. She found inspiration in the York faculty member Barbara Balfour, who, she says, "has a very strong intellectual outlook and a good sense of humour, two things I try to play with as well."

Like many of our other top M.F.A. students, Athanassiadis took considerable initiative with her education. When she couldn't arrange an official exchange through York U, she used SSHRC funding to spend a few months in Berlin: the experience was invaluable for making professional connections.

One major reason that artists do M.F.A.s is to get a teaching credential. This desire—learning more to teach more—was the main reason the artist **Victoria Cheung** enrolled, but her goals shifted along the way. Now the University of Guelph M.F.A. grad is on her way to fusing an amateur study of language with conceptualism. Cheung creates works that playfully pinpoint the

ways and places where language breaks down. Her thesis work consisted of microscope-magnified photos of thousands of asterisks that Cheung collected from print media over a period of months. She catalogued the photos in a scientific idiom and presented them at Art Metropole last fall.

“When I was doing my research, I found that asterisks have at least 14 different functions,” she explains. “There are no books that outline these. And there is only speculative information about how they originated. That ambiguity is interesting to me.” She also spent time during her degree investigating endangered languages with the help of several Guelph languages professors.

Cheung’s practice may seem a far cry from typical twentysomething art interests, but the artist notes that she was uncommonly fortunate to have a public-school art teacher who let her follow her conceptual-art compulsion as well as her interest in museums and art education. Cheung speaks fondly of faculty members like [Ben Reeves](#) and [Patrick Mahon](#), who encouraged her in her undergrad years at the University of Western Ontario, and marvels at the support she received from both students and instructors such as [James Carl](#) at Guelph. Aside from applying for teaching jobs, Cheung hopes to visit Asia and gauge how the art world, and her own art practice, operates abroad.

When **Vytas Narusevicius** was turned down for a job at the Department of External Affairs after completing his undergrad political-science degree, he couldn’t have imagined that one day art, rather than government, would be his realm for creating connections between people, but that is what has happened for the recent Emily Carr M.A.A. grad.

Though Vytas’s thesis-show paintings—which won him the school’s Governor General’s medal—at first resemble traditional abstraction, they are, to him, relational objects: “I’m a painter, and I’m also engaged in a search for discourse through a material practice,” he says from Vancouver. “The goal really was to view painting and the relationship between a painting and the viewer as a relational-aesthetics kind of thing; that there is this discourse even though it’s in a private moment.”

Narusevicius’s conceptual, theoretical and, yes, political take on painting seems particularly suited to cerebral Vancouver School traditions. (It is no accident that he did his fine-arts undergrad at UBC.) His other recent projects, which include a series of hard-edged abstractions based on Georg Cantor’s mathematical theories and a Deleuze and Guattari reading group, reflect this sensibility.

Narusevicius’s interests made Emily Carr’s inaugural M.A.A. degree class an interesting environment for him. Though Narusevicius says he would like to have seen more theoretical depth in the program, and notes that he had to move into the undergrad painting studio after ventilation in the grad area was deemed inadequate, he is generally satisfied.

“I could walk through the front door of Emily Carr and immediately have five different conversations with five different people about art,” he says. “You can’t really have that experience in many other places [than art school].”

Now graduated, Narusevicius hopes to both stay connected and connect others through a new website he's developing on the much-overlooked painting scene in Vancouver. "I hope it could change things, in a small way, at least," he says. We're quite certain that many Canadians can and will relate.

- See more at: <http://www.canadianart.ca/features/2008/12/01/class-of-2008/#sthash.EpLAEXRs.dpuf>

MAGAZINE CIEL VARIABLE

ART PHOTO MÉDIAS CULTURE

Olga Chagaoutdinova - From Russia and Cuba



A resident of Canada for the last ten years, Olga Chagaoutdinova has remained interested in the evolution of the Russian society, where she experienced the early effects of perestroika. She returned to Russia to take photographs of people and

interiors that juxtapose artefacts of traditional Soviet life with heterogeneous aspects of Western consumer society. Chagaoutdinova also sought similar traces in Cuba, another underdeveloped communist country also marked by consumer dreams. Her newly distanced gaze shaped these sensitive, spare, revealing images. Portfolio published with an original text by Gary Michael Dault.

Artist Biography

Olga Chagaoutdinova is a visual artist based in Montreal. Her work reflects her fascination with cultural codes whose exchanges construct personal identity, values, and collective and individual memories. Chagaoutdinova studied photography at the Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design, Vancouver, before going to Concordia University in Montreal, where she received her MFA in 2008. Her solo exhibition at Trois Points Gallery, Montreal, earned her recognition by Canadian Art as one of the ten best graduate students in Canada. International exhibitions, awards, and residencies have since followed. Olga Chagaoutdinova is represented by Trois Points Gallery, Montreal.

www.olgachagaoutdinova.com

Face-to-face with female killers

Valeria Zhmak
BBCRussian.com, Khabarovsk

A Canadian photographer is confronting Russians with images of women murderers, at an exhibition in the far eastern city of Khabarovsk.

Olga Shagautdinova, from Montreal, visited a women's prison camp in the village of Zaozyornoye, in the Khabarovsk region, and took about 1,000 pictures. She selected just 17 for her project.

They all show women convicted under Article 105 of the Russian penal code: premeditated murder.

Shagautdinova, whose work was included this year in the "Anthology of Contemporary Canadian Photography", says her visit to the prison camp was "a shock... this was another world, another reality".

"I saw faces which you cannot see anywhere else today.



" How sad we look "

"I thought a lot and concluded that God did not create these women the way they were - it was life and the environment that did it," Shagautdinova recalls.

"Not one of them had had a wholesome family as a child, or normal relationships with men. Before committing the crime, they were themselves subjected to violence from society, from their own husbands."

"I don't want to justify anyone, but I wanted to show the essence of these broken women. Their lives and their crimes reflect to a great extent the state of society."

The exhibition, called "The Zone", is at the Art Museum of the Far East, in Khabarovsk. Apart from the photographs on the walls, the portraits of the women convicts hang from the ceiling.

Entering the Zone

The installation engenders empathy, there is a feeling that the prisoners look you straight in the eyes. Visitors seem to enter the Zone themselves, in this closed space filled with female despair, grief and repentance.



" Their lives and crimes reflect to a great extent the state of society "

Olga Shagautdinova

Photographer

"In Russia, there are 32 female prison camps and 17 juvenile camps for girls," Shagautdinova says. "That is why my main purpose was to show the existence in our orderly world of such anti-worlds - zones of fear, alienation and, possibly, hope for salvation of the soul."

Before and during the shooting the photographer talked for hours to each of her subjects. "One of them - the one on the poster for the exhibition who hides her face in her hands - cried when I told her: 'Marina, no one ever taught you to love yourself.'"

"Another one, Lena, whom everybody takes for a boy, suffered all her life because of this rejection by society. The constant humiliation and years of stored-up bitterness spilled over into a crime," Shagautdinova says.

Harsh lessons

Nadezhda Tatun, deputy prosecutor in the town of Solnechny, Khabarovsk region, managed only twice to get suspended sentences for serious crimes committed by women.

Almost always they had killed either their husbands or their partners - "for domestic reasons" - after suffering a regular dose of beating.

" Lena, whom everybody takes for a boy "

This is in line with what one of the visitors to the exhibition said: "Women are not born murderers - it's life that turns them that way."

In Montreal, Canadian visitors often thought the women on the photographs were related - so similar had life made these completely different women: the shape of the face, the pain in the eyes, premature ageing.

Perhaps for the same reason, many of the women themselves did not like their portraits. "How sad we look", some said. But the staff in the prison camp changed their perception of some of the convicts, seeing them in a different light.

"I do not take glamorous pictures in which women look better than they actually are," the photographer says.

"Now I plan to shoot a series of portraits of the rich in Russia, people confident about themselves and their future. In any case, after I met some of them in Moscow, it seems to me an interesting project".

Story from BBC NEWS:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/europe/5245326.stm>

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