



What It Feels Like for a Girl

What It Feels Like for a Girl

KARMA CLARKE-DAVIS

LOUISE LILIEFELDT

PEACHES

FIONA SMYTH

JULIE VOYCE

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Sinbad in the Rented World/with an essay by R.M. Vaughan; and a story by Derek McCormack.

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What It Feels Like for a Girl

WITH AN ESSAY BY SALLY MCKAY

AND A STORY BY SHEILA HETI

ART GALLERY OF YORK UNIVERSITY

TORONTO



Karma Clarke-Davis
Untitled, 2003 [still detail]

ON THE ONE HAND

What It Feels Like for a Girl

Being based on the name of a Madonna song, the title to this exhibition is a ready-made. The title should, thus, be seen with quotation marks around it that set it off, almost as if at an ironic distance. It certainly isn't a declarative statement that the exhibition then goes on to demonstrate: *this* is what it feels like for a girl. So don't ask me, as the curator, what it feels like for a girl. I don't claim to know. I do know, in spite of claims to the contrary or the optimism of the third wave of feminism, that power might be temporarily disturbed but not ultimately disrupted. *Plus ça change*; in other words, business as usual. Witness the debacle around Madonna's video of the same name that was hypocritically banned from MTV and Much Music for its so-called violence against men. As if!...But why go on, the contradictions are too apparent, the movie and television counter examples too blatant to think that this censorship is other than what it is.

The exhibition is no attempt to revive gender wars, although isn't it strange that it has to justify itself, as regressively essentialist or positively thematic, for having five women artists in it, when a group outing by men only would not draw the same complaints. Is it the title alone? Admittedly, I wanted the controversy around Madonna's banned video to frame expectations of the exhibition but then not necessarily be met by the diverse work in it. Perhaps this is unfair to the respect I owe these artists, which is the reason that they were chosen, but isn't it exactly for not meeting expectations, however positively or prejudicially we might define this, that they have been selected to provide one view of Toronto art at this moment?

What It Feels Like for a Girl and *Sinbad in the Rented World*, which distributes gender differently, were always considered in my mind together as a current overview of art in Toronto—hence their co-publication.

Philip Monk, Director/Curator



Peaches
Diddle My Skiddle, 2001 [still detail]

Too Much Girl

Sally McKay

Powerful corporations spend billions to package girl power in the form of popular culture and its attendant merchandise. They sell our dreams back to us.... It becomes hard to distinguish what's genuine and what isn't when that much money's changing hands.

— EMILY POHL-WEARY, *GIRLS WHO BITE BACK*

Girl power can be smothering. At the age of thirty-seven, I am the youngest woman I know who doesn't wince at the term "feminism." And no wonder, as the movement's so-called first, second, and third waves blur together in a rootless miasma of magazine sidebar tips and talk shows. Feminism is young and can be forgiven a phase of floundering. After all, women have only been voting for about 125 years. But as we burble along, societally digesting post-slacker strappy sandals, re-retro halter tops, Camille Paglia, and *Sex and the City*, it's easy to forget that potent female power, in various forms, has been an integral cultural force for eons. The term "goddess" has always made me cringe, implying little pamphlets in purple and mauve inks for various classes on how to essentialize yourself as a woman, identify with the earth, and turn your brain to mush. A goddess should be terrifying, capable of enduring great suffering and of inflicting great misery. When Demeter's daughter Persephone was stolen away by Hades, she stopped the seasons changing. Athena sprang from the skull of Zeus, to assume dominion over the intellectual and strategy. As a good friend recently informed me, "those Hellenic goddesses didn't take no shit."

There is something of the smothering in *What It Feels Like for a Girl*. It's all a bit too much. Peaches is too much cock, sweat, and swagger. Karma Clarke-Davis is too much cunt and fecund techno voodoo. Louise Liliefeldt is too much pathos. Fiona Smyth is too much pain and Julie Joyce is too much work. But what all of these artists share is a scary sense of their agency in the world. This is no dress-up game; these girls are forged from ancient, activated mettle.

Meeting at the Crossroads, a book about girls entering puberty, demonstrates case upon case of self-confident and assertive young girls losing their feeling of entitlement to act or speak at the age of twelve or thirteen, subjugated into veritable silence. This is why we could all use a stiff shot of Peaches once in awhile. Peaches is sweaty, pugnacious, horny, and mean. She kisses girls and boys, hurls kicks at her audience, wears a penis, and just might hump your leg at a party. She is also larger than life. Like an eight-year-old yelling "Look at me!" and skateboarding, cannonballing, climbing a tree, Peaches embodies entitlement. Not every girl has the gumption to call herself "fatherfucker." It is no wonder that she has become a rock star.

What It Feels Like for a Girl opens with *Kick It*, Peaches and Iggy Pop singing in a technologically manufactured duet. One gender and several generations apart, the two icons duke it out in punk rock camaraderie. Despite his ghoulish death head, Iggy Pop looks like a child, swinging his long hair and writhing to the beat. He and Peaches fling themselves around with abandon, skinny chests heaving with the exertion of self-expression.

Fatherfucker, the title of her latest album, is a bold unusual phrase, and its transgression is in the service of expanding self. Peaches, for all her raunch and bump and grind, is not so much a sex object as a sex demon, a little imp that might perch on the headboard of your bed while you're screwing and cheer you on. In her film *Lover Tits*, two hot, tough girls ride around a back alley on very cool chopper bicycles while a boyish young Peaches sings into the bedroom mirror and hops around. The girls caress their bikes, snorging the seats and licking the chrome. In another act, Peaches manipulates two metal balls about her own red-clad pudenda, making the visual pun that yes, this girl has kohonés. While the more conventional forms of sexy girl power involve lipstick and eyelashes, Peaches fills in the testosterone gap.

While Peaches plays with her penis, Karma Clarke-Davis is all about labia. The sexuality in this work is dark and swampy. In her untitled video, gigantic lips fill the screen. Tipped ninety degrees to read like a vagina, they quiver and jolt in an extreme sexual condition. This monumental figure floats in video collage over the snowy outdoor scenes from the horror film, *The Shining*. The dark things in ourselves that we try to bury, may manifest as supernatural, as ghosts, but it is our own human weirdness that really scares us. The music is a song by Faithless, a dirty grinding tune that begins, "I'm a sexual animal/eat you like a cannibal/Crammed full of energy/I'm inflammable." There is a dangerous bargain implied. Clarke-Davis might offer herself as the cipher for your inner darkness, but there will be no "safe word." You will have to endure whatever horror Clarke-Davis chooses to dish out. Like a denied desire, she will not stay buried, and the more you might try to keep her in the closet, the more monstrous she will become.

The monster in this video is in blackface. As the journey unfolds, a car driving through a snowy tunnel of trees, windshield wipers swishing away great white flakes, a face appears, covered with deep brown make-up. The exaggerated lips flash in yellow, pink, and green; acidic, techno hues. The monster's makeup is patchy, and there is a black bar across her forehead censoring out the spot where an urna ought to be. A split-frame single eye appears, a demonic mirroring of two halves that read as one.

In Karma Clarke-Davis's earlier video work, *Doom Eager: Heavy Duty Black* (curated by Philip Monk for The Power Plant show *Substitute City*), she appears as the devil, bearing massive horns and stalking the city at night. This kinetic power position, both alien and predatory, has a root in cultural identity and Clarke-Davis's history coming from Trinidad and Tobago to live in Saskatchewan, Toronto, Berlin. Here, a black woman appears in blackface, a masquerade-like image, an icon of a self that will not behave politely and demurely but will rather enforce a sexy acid-trippy, high-tech, voodoo dance party and take you to places you never intended to go.

When Louise Liliefeldt is performing, she cuts the air at a different angle from the rest of us. Dignified and dangerous, her actions are offered as a challenge and a gift. Through endurance and simple exertions, she objectifies herself, and we experience a shadow of the pain that dehumanization inflicts on the subjugated.

Louise Liliefeldt's November 27, 2003 performance consisted of a series of simple actions in the rotunda at York University's Vari Hall. She slowly drank a glass of red wine, letting the empty glass fall from her hand and smash on the polished floor, the shards scattered around her bare feet. She played the "Knife On The Water" game, jabbing a blade between her fingers in rhythmic tension, building on the accumulating energy of fear and accelerating slowly 'til the blade was coming down so hard it was sticking into the board below and required a backwards thrust to pull it out each time. She skipped with a thick rope, her feet softly patting the ground, chest

moving in exertion, face calm. For the finale she knelt in front of a metal tub full of water, her body poised, and began to dunk her head into the tub. A microphone near the surface of the water caught the simple sounds of splash and drip as she submerged and surfaced, her black hair running in streams. The action grew in intensity and became nearly sexual, a repeated plunging that was frighteningly nearer to drowning than to washing. When this task was completed she walked over to a camera and sat before it. Face blank, pose erect, subjecting herself to the camera's eye with steadfast resignation.

Barefoot, in a simple white dress, Liliefeldt's form was full of dignity and grace, passing through space with calm and self-control. We deflect our eyes and stand mumbling with cap in hand. Then watch her take up the knife...and enter an extended hold-your-breath moment of empathetic terror—it *can happen* that loveliness is defiled by violence. The knife game is a chance to pray for human dignity, a chance to invest in integrity, to know that should the knife slice off a finger, should blood spurt out all over that simple white dress, we would bear witness to the violation. We are now invested, and we know that the dignity remains, that the person, wrenchingly, is not destroyed. The bitter human truth is that excruciating pain and humiliation do *not* obliterate a person, but are carried within her, born by her, expelled from her. Liliefeldt sits in front of the camera, logged for public record. Defiant? Defiance is not necessary in the presence of this fierce and tested dignity. It reads as an act of solidarity with all people who are objectified by surveillance and dehumanisation: if you must see me, then see me, but your looking does not erase me. Your logging and numbering and violent acts do not erase me and they do not erase my dignity. And they do not erase our prayers.

When Fiona Smyth was in Taiwan, people kept telling her that she looked like the goddess Guan Yin (or Kuan Yin). Guan Yin is the Goddess of Mercy and Passion, who, after putting in her corporeal time on earth, opted not to pass into Nirvana until all the other people in the world were without pain. Smyth says, "They only see a resemblance because I have a round face." Modest and powerful, she seems to me to have one foot planted in another world.

Smyth's mural, titled *Spinnbarkeit and the Science of Elasticity*, is founded in pain and resilience. Humans who possess fallopian tubes are keenly aware that the human body is, in itself, a dense and multilayered universe. Spinnbarkeit refers to the gloopy and viscous phase of cervical mucous when the body is at its most fertile. Elasticity is a survival strategy, a mechanism for deflecting and absorbing the bombardments of suffering, illness, and confusion that come packaged with bodily existence. The initials E and Z, painted here on a pair of giant sneakers, are a punning testament to how life ought to be.

Smyth re-works symbols over and over, and some of the most common are indexed in a key in the back of her recent book of drawings, *Cheez 100*. This open-source style of information sharing is part of Smyth's power. The images may appear murky, but there are no secrets buried here. Smyth's mural spans a long wall, a sad, lovely graphic painting on a rich black ground. A face with pretty, gory, spurty-tumour hair barrettes, and a menstruating woman for a nose, sticks out her long bumpy tongue in a kind of bad-girl welcome. The Sadko girl with long black hair keeps on truckin' with determined, stoop-shouldered resignation. An elephant girl hovers near the ground, her long nose a recurring symbol. There is an army of thirteen girls and a woman sleeping on a bed of nails. A big figure faces left, her belly full of monstrous chromosome-like shapes and fetal forms, a tiny little chair beneath her representing an Alice in Wonderland-style sense of scale. The dream world and the real world carry equal weight.

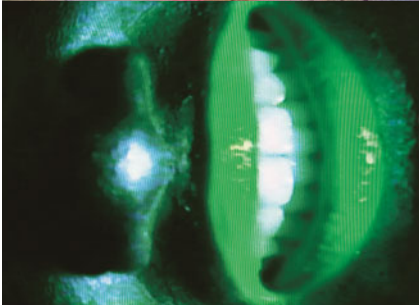
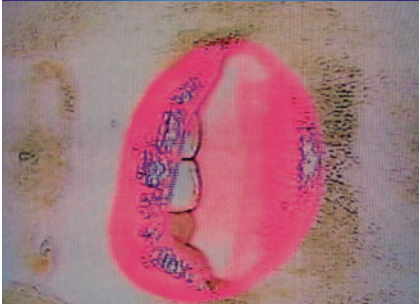
Smyth, who is successful as a cartoonist and an illustrator, enjoys her gallery work because it allows her more scope to address the dark side. There is both illness and trauma in her family. Raised Roman Catholic, she has a Madonna on her dresser and an interest in stigmata. The bodies in her artwork are erupting, sprouting scary yet familiar entities. Our bodies hold on to information and retell awful truths that have never spoken. Smyth's lexicon includes a large-nosed character named Swonk. This wise little figure represents that dark knowledge. Spell swonk backwards; the nose knows.

It is astounding that this is the first time Julie Voyce and Fiona Smyth have shown together. Both artists flirt with graphic design, and both have a practice that functions outside of the gallery context of fine art. Voyce has been deeply involved with mail art for many years. Mail artists are interconnected with the particular brand of fluid, no-strings intimacy found among networks of people who live in disparate locales. Small art-like objects are passed about, continually morphed and reinvented. Meaning is never fixed, it is all about communication. Says Julie Voyce, "Gallery art is critical. Mail art is not critical. It's good to have both, to play, but also to know when to pull in the fishing line and make it tight."

Voyce, most likely the hardest working artist in Toronto, is the master of negotiating between rigour and fun. "I heard the phrase 'women's lib' when I was eleven years old," she says, "and I thought to myself: Good! Now girls can do whatever they want. That's what this is all about. [Feminism] is so that we can work with men, so we can all work together without divides." Work, work, work. This is the engine that runs Julie Voyce. Her prints, full of cartoonish *joie de vivre*, are the product of a rigorous, labour-intensive process. Subjecting her printmaking practice to sets of strict parameters, Voyce is continually pushing her media and her approach. The prints in this show are from a body of work that employs only orange, transparent cyan, and black inks. Voyce has restricted her palette in order to push her own limits, and has decided not to introduce any other colours until she has a very good reason. Says Voyce, "There are dividends when you stick to your art and work for a number of years. The work becomes an entity in itself and starts talking to you about what to do next. You learn to trust it, and do what it tells you."

The results are damn good art. *Frost* is one of my favourites, an almost-landscape with active, bounded areas of crystals and stripes that abut and intersect. Planes of blue orange and green, alive with marks and direction, both flatten and recede, in a satisfying abstraction that is so very nearly figurative. *Sun* includes a batch of strange crystalline shapes, weird hard and pointy sun dogs, that emerge in a cloud of brownish black dark smoke, billowing from a burst of light. All planes are bounded, yet their energy expands beyond the edges. It's a bursting kind of kinetic tension that produces an exhilarating feeling of buoyancy and ever bubbling potential. Time and meaning are fluid, muscular and always on the move. Prints are a fix, a freeze of fluid inks, a distilled emotional gesture, an instant of a vision or idea. In Voyce's words, "The world is in flux, you are in flux, and you are trying to records moments in that flux."

What does it feel like for a girl? Too much testosterone, too much estrogen, too much sex, too much alienation, too much murkiness, too much clarity, too much integrity, too much subjugation, too much pain, too much memory, too much fun, too much work, too much power. All of the women in this show are extreme, their agency a force that cannot be denied. And that is a gift to the rest of us who still struggle to find a forum for the aspects of ourselves that seem monstrous, wondrous, awesome, and larger than life.



Karma Clarke-Davis
Untitled, 2003 [6 stills]

OPPOSITE PAGE:
I, 2003 [still]

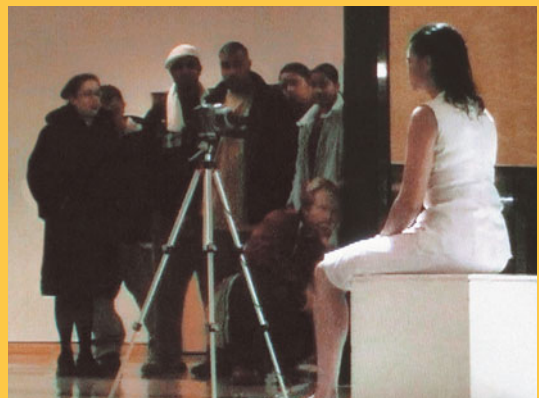


KARMA CLARKE-DAVIS

Louise Liliefeldt
Untitled, 2003

OPPOSITE PAGE:
Untitled, 2003 [6 stills]



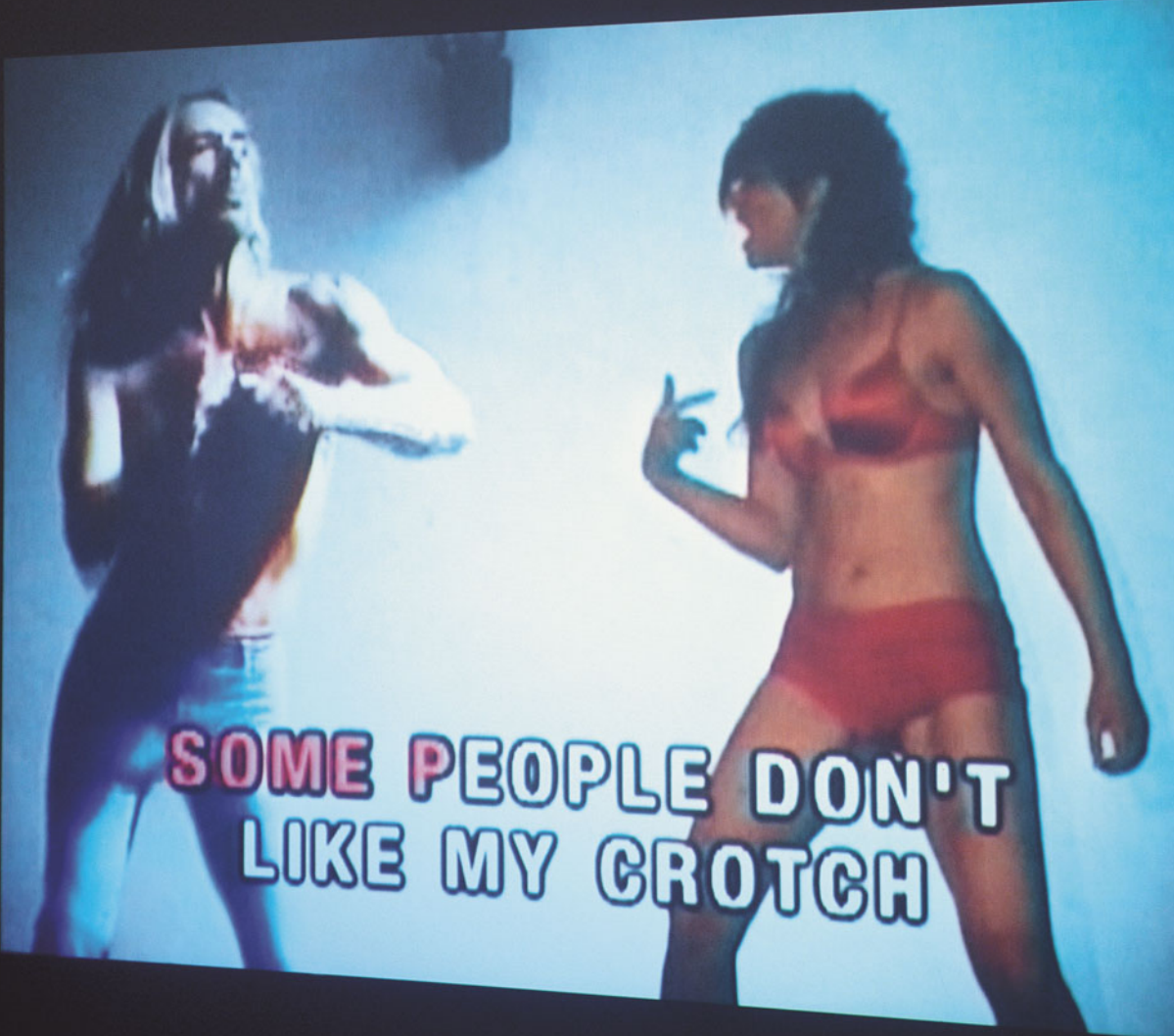


LOUISE LILIEFELDT



Peaches
Lovertits, 1999 [6 stills]

OPPOSITE PAGE:
Peaches (with Kara Blake and jd Samson)
KICK IT (in collaboration with Iggy Pop), 2003



**SOME PEOPLE DON'T
LIKE MY CROTCH**



Fiona Smyth
Spinnbarkeit and the Science of Elasticity, 2003 [detail]



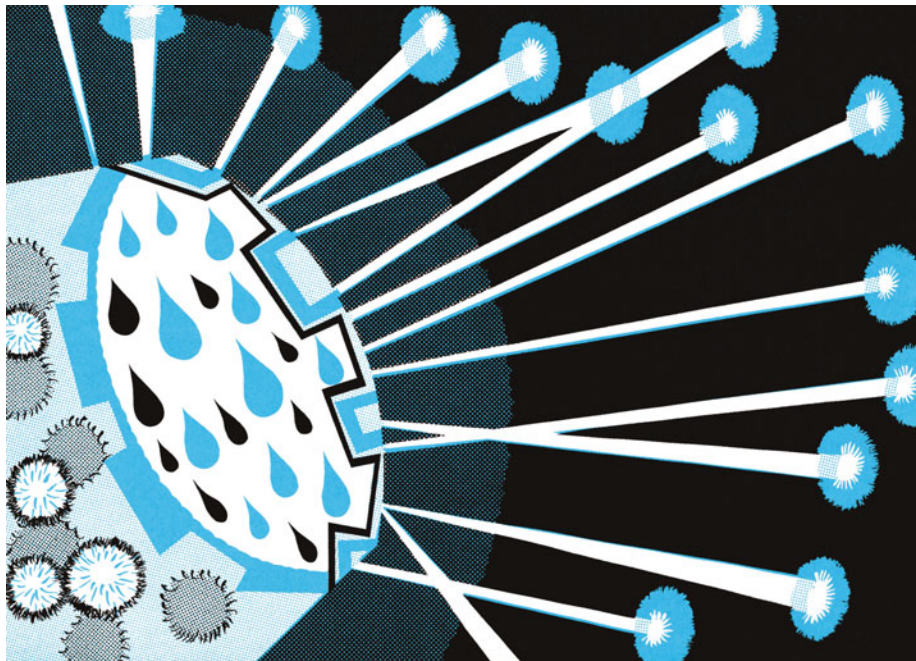
FIONA SMYTH



Fiona Smyth
Spinnbarkeit and the Science of Elasticity, 2003







Julie Joyce
Light Stencil, 2001

OPPOSITE PAGE:
Striking Oil, 2001

FOLLOWING PAGE:
Casper, 2001 [detail]

JULIE VOYCE



Wakefield Sheila Heti

I can't predict what it would have been like for me if I'd stayed, and it was nothing I really considered because I've always wanted to leave Wakefield for the city, which to me meant Ottawa at first and then Toronto.

I would have thought that I would be sad or upset at leaving my friends behind and my life, the places I had grown up with, but after a few weeks I never thought about those people again. I just didn't care. I don't care. It seems like they're from another world, and Wakefield doesn't even seem like my world at all, or where I spent more than half the life I've lived so far. I know that if I ever went back I wouldn't feel sentimental about any of the places or anybody there. I just don't really feel like it's my home at all, but like some other person that was named me lived there, but not me as I understand myself today, and none of the people I consider my friends or am close to live there, but they're all here in Toronto. I see them every night or sometimes every other night, sometimes two or three times a week on College, where we go to drink and check out the people walking by, and it's so civilized, and you can just check the people out and then go home. It doesn't have to weigh on you like in Wakefield where everything meant something and it was so intense. I'm really much happier to be here, and I don't think I would ever go back in a million years or more. It would be like dying a slow death, which I don't want. I feel like I've been left behind, who I never think about so much anyway. I hope they're all leading pleasant lives. I don't wish them ill. I don't think about them at all.

I would sometimes like to go back and visit my family, but instead I make them come here, except for Christmas, otherwise I just don't go back. They understand this, I think, but they don't understand. I told my mother that it was fine for her because she grew up in the city, and she just moved there when I was born so they could have an easier life. For her it was a choice, but for me it was a never a choice to live in Wakefield, and so I had to get out, just as she had to get out of the city, but in her mind I have no reason. I have no reason to leave. That's not at all the truth, because my reasons are as good and as strong as hers, and just because I don't have a child to legitimize it doesn't mean that these aren't legitimate feelings that I have a right to, and that I don't have a right to do what I want with my life, when it's my life and I can do what I want with it, whether that means never again going back to Wakefield, or even just for Christmases if that's what's going to make everyone happy. I'm so glad I work in an office where there are people on other floors who don't know me, don't know my business and don't care, and I don't have to stop and stand around and talk with everyone just because they know my name and know my mother. I'm so glad nobody knows my business except for who I want. I'm a much more private person than anyone back home in my family understands, and I wish they would stop telling the neighbours about me, and about how I'm progressing in my life in terms of the usual milestones. It kills me that people in Wakefield still know my business. It's like I can never leave, no matter how little they mean to me or how thoroughly I purge that place from my head. It's a good place for a kid to grow up, definitely, but I don't even have kids, so what are they talking to me about that for?

My life here in Toronto is not what I would call super unique or super important. I do my job and I think I do it well, at least that's what people tell me. I work five days a week in PR. It's no big deal, but we do get perks, and it has prestige. In my circle, there are three other girls who work in PR or promotions, and we have one friend who is a graphic designer, who did all of our websites, which are business websites, in case a client or a prospective employer wants to look us up. I don't think I would have had the time to find a real professional to do it for me if I hadn't known Jenny, and I probably would have never had a website. If I had lived in Wakefield, I'm sure

I would have never had a website, and I probably wouldn't be working in PR. I get to visit a lot of furniture showrooms because my job allows me access to studios where people work, and I take advantage of those opportunities always to meet the designer and learn more. I'm not saying it's the most glamorous life a person can lead, but it's pretty great for a person from a small town, especially when I think about what the expectations were for me, because I certainly didn't get any special encouragement, and that's why I really respect my friends, who are always pushing me to go harder and to try things I'm afraid of in my field, and to meet people I'm threatened by. The other day I met the furniture designer Matthew Barney, and he was exceptionally nice and took the time to answer all my questions, when I'm just a PR agent, so I learned a lot from that experience, that you can't judge people as necessarily being superior to you just because they are well-known and a little famous. It could be that they're famous because they're nice people. It never pays to be a jerk. I don't want to pretend or make out like I've got it all figured out just because I understand about my field. All I'm saying is that I'm happy in Toronto, and whatever complaints I have are little ones. I have a really supportive group of girlfriends, and it's only a matter of time before I find a man to marry.

When we go out it's just the usual things. We like to wear nice clothes and eat nice food, good food, sometimes expensive food, if it means going expensive, just like people in their twenties everywhere. I don't think the way we do things is so original or so unique. I like to wear make-up, especially lipstick, and yes, like any woman, sometimes after eating I have to go to the washroom and reapply it, or if I'm too lazy, reapply it at the table. But I don't think that's so bad, it can even be considered sexy. I know that some men find it very sexy to watch a woman reapply her lipstick. }I don't wear a lot of other make-up, except for foundation and eyeliner. I've never understood the point of mascara, though I wore it when I was a teenager, but it made me look horrible. I like hose, black, and I like showing off my thighs and my calves, because I run and I'm proud of my muscles, because it took work to get them. As far as the rest of me goes, I'm not one for showing off my breasts in public, though I don't see anything wrong with it as long as it makes a woman comfortable. It's okay with me, and I have no reason to condemn someone for wearing the clothes that suit them and make them happy. I think too much emphasis is placed on what a woman should or shouldn't be allowed to wear, whereas in my mind it makes no difference to the person's intelligence or reputation. A lot of my friends wear very revealing tops, and the only reason I don't is because I'm small-chested. It's their prerogative, I just choose not to, and choose to show off my legs. I like bustiers and I think they look smart with jackets, but if I didn't work in an office, I might fill my wardrobe with less conservative clothes, who knows. It's hard to separate what I can afford from what I really like. Then, as I said, I would like to find a husband, but I am content to date until I do. Some people find it a bore or a hassle, but I just look at it as a part of life. If a nice man asks me out and I'm not doing anything that night, I don't see why I shouldn't go out with him. I'm not a snob, and I know the perfect man is not going to fall out of the sky without me trying.

We like to go out and dance, and often we just make a night of it, going to some club somewhere and dancing and we don't care if we meet any guy, but that was where I met Dave, at one of those clubs down on King Street, and he wanted me, and we ended up dancing and talking, and then were back at his place which is where he raped me. I'm not saying that it wasn't partly my responsibility, that I should have asked my girlfriends to call me on my cell to make sure I was all right when I agreed to go home with him. But these things happen on the path to love.

I have heard of people who are traumatized by it, and maybe if the situation had been different, like if he had jumped out of the bushes or come into my apartment, it would have been different. I've thought a lot about this. In my situation, someone could argue that it wasn't rape and that I just let things go too far and what could I expect, but that's happened before and I didn't call it rape. Anyway, that happened, and then for a while I wasn't interested in going out to clubs anymore, and that is when I discovered the online encyclopedia which Britannica just put online on their website, and though I've always thought it was for losers, I really was amazed at every single thing they chose to put in there, and in those months, when I didn't so much feel like going out, I just had a whole revival of learning in my life, and it was great. I still miss it sometimes, and think that I really should just sometimes stay in and not go out and learn some more about whatever, I mean that was the thing about it. It didn't really matter what I typed in, because I was just finding everything interesting. That everything is worthy of a "description" is what really affected me, I think, because in the real world, it's not like that. Not everything is worthy of a description, and sometimes people say things and you just glaze over, but there was something about the way everything was valued equally in the eyes of the encyclopedia, and even the marmot, even the equator, even the Rolls Royce, it made me want to cry. But in the end I just went back to my routine and I don't think after my emotional shake-up passed I actually had the willpower to say no to my friends and stay home and read the online encyclopedia, or even really wanted to. Though it's strange, because I look back on those months as really good ones, when I was just solitary in my room, and there wasn't all the noise and people.

I'm definitely counting on my talent and my looks to get me through these next few years, until I build up a solid resume and skills, and then I won't worry so much about my future. Maybe I'll marry a rich man, that would be great, but I can't count on it. No one can. Marta would like me to take a design program with her at night at the community college downtown, but I can't. I just have to come home and lie down on my daybed. I can barely bring myself to read a magazine, and I subscribe to a psychology magazine because I was in a psychology program in college. I want to keep up on things but sometimes I'm just too tired, and then I fall asleep without even taking off my clothes. It's not the kind of life you want to show off to a man, though I think if I lived with one, I would become more capable. At least I would have someone to take care of, not myself.

Though I didn't want to, and would rather have not, I did come across something very disturbing at my house. I do happen to know that people are into strange and sick things, but the tenant downstairs from me, whose mail sometimes comes to my door, had been ordering these catalogues that I consider very sick, in which urination plays a part in a very sexual theme. I have tried to resist looking at them, and I know they are none of my business, but sometimes they are packaged together in a bundle with mine, and once I was mistaken in thinking it was for me, because there wasn't his name on it and it didn't say "basement" on the address, and having opened it I couldn't then give it to him, or else I would never have been able to look at him again, and it's hard enough as it is already, just having seen what I saw. I don't know what it is that makes a person come up with these sexual fantasies for themselves, and I am afraid what will happen to me if I do understand. There are other signs of a sickness in him. I feel bad for the women he brings back, and he does sometimes, and I wonder if they're into that too, or they don't know and are just lying there in bed, naked, waiting for sex, when he takes out his dick and pisses on them.

Now and then I do not feel satisfied to be living here. Sometimes the noise is too much, or that you can never get away from people looking into your windows at night, everyone on the street who just doesn't care, but I would never go home. I would suffer any indignity rather than leave Toronto and return to Wakefield. I am determined to stay here as long as I can. I have a life here, a good life, and it's treating me well. I have nothing to complain about, when I think about my life in Toronto. I have everything I could expect or could have ever hoped to have, just a girl like me from a small town. Whatever is possible in the city for someone who was born here and grew up here, is possible for someone like me who grew up on a farm near the Gatineau. This is what makes Toronto such a good place to be, and the kind of place that I can call my own, and my home, and it's true for me, as true as it is for anyone who was here first. Now it's my home, too, and I intend to stay. We have the Blue Jays, we have the Maple Leafs hockey team, we have the basketball league and all the theatres, the beautiful Princess of Wales, and restaurants from every nationality in the world. There are neighbourhoods and communities, and lots of schools and lots of parks. I don't see why all this happiness should not be mine. I think I have found my home now, and I am reluctant to leave it for some place that I know nothing about, where I have no friends. I feel like I am no longer an outsider, so why would I go someplace where I am an outsider, even if it has the mountains and the ocean like Vancouver, or French-speaking people who are sophisticated in Montreal? If everyone hates Toronto so much, why is it the greatest city in this country where all the immigrants all want to move to, and where I wanted to move to when I decided to leave Wakefield? I can't understand why so many people put down Toronto. I never would, when it's given me what I have now, which is a good life, and a life that could become even better. It's right to defend the place you call home, vigilantly, against those who would take it from you, or try to ruin it for you with all their criticism and complaining.

Artist's Biographies

KARMA CLARKE-DAVIS is a multi-disciplinary artist who currently lives in Berlin. Originally born in Trinidad and Tobago she grew up in Toronto. Trained as a dancer, she attended a school for the arts where she also learned drama, music, and visual art. After living in Montreal for four years, where she studied at Concordia University, she returned to Toronto and became a founding member of the art collective Syndicate. Thematically her work is a complex mixture of high and low, classical and popular culture, a reflection of her own cross-culturalism. She has shown extensively in Toronto including *Substitute City* at The Power Plant and a solo exhibition at the Art Gallery of Ontario. She has shown in New York, Los Angeles, Paris, London, Berlin, Amsterdam, Vienna, Mumbai, Cape Town, and Sao Paulo.

LOUISE LILIEFELDT: I am interested in the links between expanded emotional/psychological states and physical experience. My work is concerned with the politics of identity especially as it intersects with the cultural conventions of spectatorship. The methodology of my performance art practice is shaped by the notion of always taking into consideration the significance of changes in circumstance. My performances have been presented across Canada, as well as in the U.S., Poland, Turkey and Wales. I am a co-founder (1997) and current steering committee member of 7a*11d International Festival of Performance Art, www.7a-11d.ca, and I currently teach Performance Art at the University of Toronto.

PEACHES (MERRILL NISKER) is a Canadian-born, Berlin-based artist who likes to sing about sex. Born in Toronto in 1968, she grew up around the corner from Rush and played in a number of bands, including Mermaid Café, Fancypants Hoodlum, and the Shit before becoming Peaches. Her web site, www.peachesrocks.com, will tell you that Peaches embodies sexual freedom with an admirably nasty attitude. Her albums include *The Teaches of Peaches* (2000), and *Fatherfucker* (2003).

FIONA SMYTH is a Toronto-based artist exploring popular and alternative cultural icons and imagery. Smyth employs surrealist, abstract, spiritual, feminist, and pro-sex strategies to achieve her unique aesthetic. Her use of media also reflects this range of interest by using different formats including illustration, painting, animation, music covers, web-based art, and her fabulous murals. Smyth's exhibitions include *Stock 20*, Taichung, Taiwan; *Bride of Gene*, SPIN Gallery, Toronto; *Open 2002*, Venice; *The Fourth Calligraphy Biennale*, Jeollabuk-Do, South Korea; and *The Somnambulist Wake*, Women's Art Resource Centre, Toronto.

JULIE VOYCE has: done karaoke in a rubber skirt, graduated from art college, impersonated Baby Spice, been a Human Boutique, landed on Mars, exhibited in Vancouver, London, England, Halifax, Sackville, Buffalo, Montreal, Victoria, Winnipeg, Rome, San Antonio, and Toronto. She really likes: elbow grease, black humor, the subway in Paris, the basket cash-out at the Metro Tesco, murky impulses, cute little mules in size nine, tough man shoes in size seven, mail art, the Sunnyside boardwalk, making the following things: dolls, trinkets, prints, drawings, paintings, the odd installation, and the occasional book. Her staples are: chocolate, coffee, and mayonnaise.

Exhibition Works

Karma Clarke-Davis

I, 2003

DVD 2:50 min.

Untitled, 2003

DVD 4:36 min.

Louise Liliefeldt

Untitled, 2003

Performance in Vari Hall Rotunda

November 27, 2003

Video documentation: Leslie Peters

Peaches

Lovertits, 1999

Camera and editing: Kara Blake

Music video on DVD 3:40 min.

Diddle My Skiddle, 2001

Camera: Malcolm Fraser

Editing: Kara Blake

Music video on DVD 4:39 min.

Peaches (with Kara Blake and jd Samson)

KICK IT (in collaboration with Iggy Pop), 2003

DVD karaoke installation 2:30 min.

Fiona Smyth

Spinnbarkeit and the Science of Elasticity, 2003

Wall mural commissioned by the Art Gallery
of York University

Mixed media 2.7 x 13.7 m

Julie Voyce

Screen prints with magic marker

Inside Structures, 2000, 35.6 x 25.4 cm

Sample, 2000, 35.6 x 25.4 cm

Scene, 2000, 35.6 x 25.4 cm

Casper, 2001, 35.6 x 25.4 cm

1400, 2001, 25.4 x 35.6 cm

Frost, 2001, 35.6 x 25.4 cm

Light Stencil, 2001, 25.4 x 35.6 cm

Striking Oil, 2001, 35.6 x 25.4 cm

Two Run Widow, 2001, 35.6 x 25.4 cm

Blob, 2002, 19 x 14 cm

Jo's Gift, 2002, 19 x 14 cm

North, 2002, 19 x 14 cm

Sun, 2002, 35.6 x 25.4 cm

Home Maker, 2003, 22.9 x 17.8 cm

Mail-Out Core Project, 1997-98,

10.2 x 22.9 cm each

Mail-Out Core Project, 1998-99,

7.6 x 15.2 cm each

Mail-Out Core Project, 1999-00,

40.6 x 22.9 cm each

Mail-Out Core Project, 2000-01,

7.7 x 15.2 cm each

Mail-Out Core Project, 2002-03,

15.2 x 35.6 cm each

Lovely Whads #1, #2, #3, 2002,

15.2 x 9.5 cm each

Lovely Whads #4, #5, 2002-03,

15.4 x 7.6 cm each